COMICS FOCUS

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June 1996

X-MEN™

THE SENTINELS...LIVE

COMICS FOCUS

number one

contents

section one. The Focus Bullpen
Jim Lee has some unfinished business, another freakin crossover, and spandex are all explained. PLUS . . .learn how to get those nasty wine stains out of linen tablecloths.

section two. A Brief History of the X-Men
Thirty-five years of comic book history neatly packaged in only a few pages? Sure, no problem for the Comics Focus staff. We just wrote really small.

section three. The Story of Wolverine
How can you fault a character who's short, scrappy, and can skewer his own kabobs? Brian Peterson certainly can't.

section four. The Chris Claremont Interview
The former X-Men god speaks about storytelling, dangling plot lines, and gives us the recipe for a great bread pudding. Plus, learn about the other projects on Claremont's slate.

section five. The Mark Waid Interview
Mr. Waid talks about Moses Magnum, Onslaught, and the state of post-Cold War Russia. Oh yeah, we also talk about his new job as X-Men scribe.

section six. A X-Universe Storyline Update
Will Jubilee get acne? Does Wolfsbane have fleas? What color are Scott Summers new contact lenses? Find out all this, and more, as we update you on the current state of the X-Universe

section seven. X-Men on Film
They're on television, they're in the movies. The next thing you know they'll be manipulating our very dreams. It's a conspiracy I tell ya!!

section eight. Independent Thought
Independent comic book publisher Bryan J.L. Glass reveals how the X-Men influenced his career in the industry. In addition, Bryan will be reading us some of his favorite sonnets.

section nine. X-Stuff
The end of the magazine. Here you'll find information on Beast, Nightcrawler, and the reasons why we think X-Men is the greatest comic book in the free world. Oh, and Rich Keller (me again) will massage his ego a little bit more (can never have too small of an ego).

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Any similarity between staff members and any persons living or dead is actually intended. We're weird that way.

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April 1996

Comics Focus Is The New

Quarterly News Magazine

From Vantage That Focuses

On A New

Subject Each Issue

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in the beginning...

Why the X-Men?

Why not. Gosh, you ask alot of questions. You think I have all the answers? Who do you think I am, Carl friggin' Sagan? Why I oughta. . .

Okay, the medication has finally kicked in. Now, what was your question again? Oh, yes . . . Why the X-Men? Well, it could be that the X-books are the best selling group of comics in the United States. It could be that they account for nearly 15 percent of all comics sold in shops across the country. It could be that it's the greatest soap opera since Romeo & Juliet. Or, it could be that we just did it to make lots of money.

Pick any reason; however, no matter how you slice it, it means that the X-Men are the hottest thing going today. The twelve monthly X-titles account for nearly thirty percent of the superhero books Marvel Comics produces. The animated X-Men series is constantly rated in the top ten of children's shows. X-Men action figures are flying off the toy store racks.

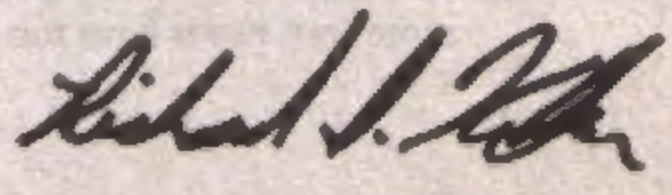
But that's not all. An X-Men motion picture is in the works. The X-books will be the starting off point for the "Onslaught" saga. Mark Waid has been picked to script the X-Men title. Face it, the X-Men ain't going away too soon. And that, true believer, is why this magazine is what it is.

So, who's this magazine geared to? There you go, asking those questions again. This periodical is geared to anyone who's ever picked up an X-title, or watched a cartoon, or was just curious to see what all the fuss was about. It's for the new fan who wants to know about the X-Men's colorful past, and it's for the fan who knows everything, but just wants to make sure he/she isn't missing any details. Granted, this magazine is not all encompassing — we would need several issues to tell the complete story of the X-Men and their friends. However, we here at **Comics Focus** think we did a damn fine job of telling a comprehensive tale about the greatest superhero team in comics.

And, we wouldn't have been able to put it together without assistance from some great people who deserve much credit. My thanks go out to:

- Vantage Publications Publisher Rob Golub, for having the guts to hand over the editing chores to yours truly. Rob, I hope I did ya proud;
- Art Director Mike Munshaw, for putting together the lovely piece of material you see here today, and for having patience while I battled with the Compuserve email system;
- Editorial Assistant Brian Peterson, for putting together a comprehensive timeline of X-Men history;
- Mark Worth, who provided quite a bit of research material for me, and has quite a decent X-book collection;
- Ron Catapano and Chris Heard, owners of Comics Plus (FREE PLUG: 434 Pine Street, Mt. Holly, NJ, 609/667-6117), who let me peruse their shelves to catch up on the lives of those merry mutants;
- The men and women of The Uncanny X-Page website (http://www.students.uiuc.edu/%7Em-blase/x-page.html). Without their links to the various X-Men newsgroups I would've blown alot of my free America On-Line time (thanks to them as well);
- My mother and father, basically for giving me life;
- Les Daniels, who wrote a great book, **Marvel: Five Fabulous Decades of the World's Greatest Comics** (1991), which helped me fill in alot of the early X-Men history;
- Stan "The Man" Lee & Jack "King" Kirby, for coming up with the idea in the first place;
- And finally, you the reader. Without you're interest in the X-Men, and comic books in general, I would not be here inflating my ego.

Thank you all. And now, on with the show!



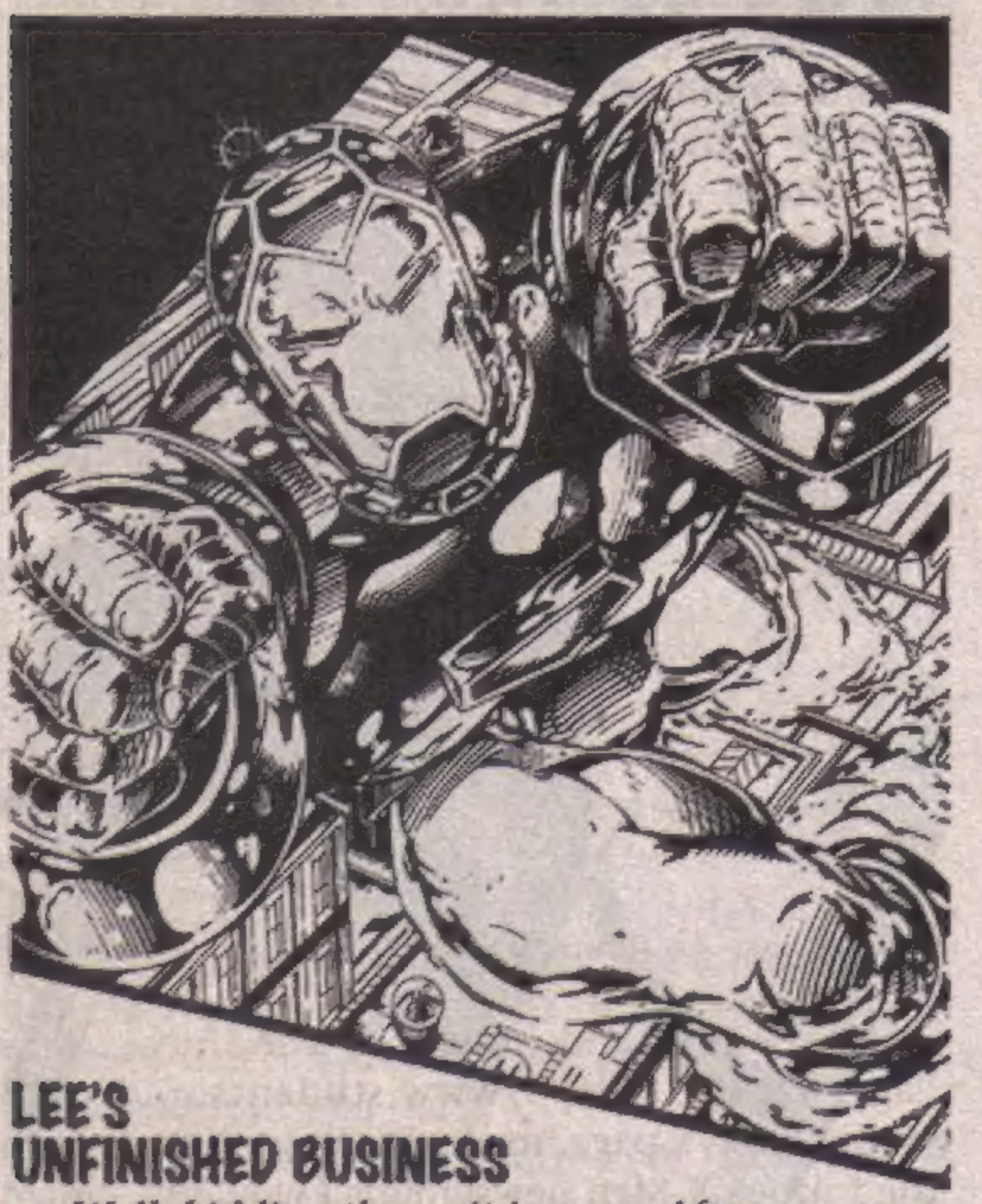
Rich Keller
Editor-In-Chief

focus bullpen

Unbelievably there is other news out there besides the X-Men, and the extensive research staff at our palatial Comics Focus offices is determined to provide you with the latest and greatest information out there in the comic world. It's either that, or they'll be working the drive-thru window at the Jack-In-The-Box. So, without further ado . . .

WILDSTORM STUFF

Quite a bit of material came into the offices this month from WildStorm Productions and Homage Studios. Guess Jim Lee is off his sabbatical, huh? Anyway, here's just some of the information we received.



Iron Man™ & © 1996 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

LEE'S UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Well, kiddies, the wait is over. After weeks of fan and industry speculation, WildStorm Production's Jim Lee has announced the creative teams for his share of Marvel's 'Unfinished Business' program. And they look pretty damn good.

The **Fantastic Four** will be penciled by Lee himself, as well as co-written by him and his partner in crime Brandon Choi. Together, the two of them have created such characters as **WildC.A.T.S.**, **Gen 13**, and **Deathblow** for WildStorm. Lee's pencils will be inked by Scott Williams.

Iron Man will be co-written by Lee as well, this time with partner, and reserve X-Man, Scott Lobdell. Whilce Portacio will do the artistic honors. Currently no inker has been assigned.

WILDSTORM ANNOUNCES $1.75 LINE

Whoa! Did I actually write that correctly. Lemme look at the release again . . . Uh-huh, WildStorm . . .Jim Lee. . .Hazard. . .$1.75. Yup, it's all right here on the fax. This must mean I'm in an alternate universe, like on that show Sliders. Yeah, that's it, that's the ticket.

Amazing, but true. Jim Lee's WildStorm Productions is bucking the high-priced trend with a new line of full-color comics for a buck seventy-five. These comics will be 24 pages instead of the traditional 32. What this means to you, the Comics Focus reader, is 20 pages of story and only 4 pages of text and advertising — the pages that the reading public finds least interesting.

The first in this new line, **Hazard**, will debut in May. It's created and written by Jeff Mariotte (**Deadly Duo**), who is also WildStorm's Director of Marketing. It will be penciled and inked by two new talents, Roy Allan Martinez and Gerry Alanguilan. It's the story of a bounty hunter who's injected with experimental nanotechnology and becomes a reluctant super-hero (isn't that always the case?). A reworked **Union** book will join the line in June. This re-launch will be written by creator Mike Heisler and penciled by Randy Green. Soon to follow will be a mini-series and a superhero team book.

"I'm anxious to face the challenge of promoting a line of comics that speak directly to the concerns expressed to us by retailers and fans alike," said Mariotte. He added that, even at their low price, the new line of books will maintain high standards with all original material. "That's what people tell us they want, and what we're committed to giving them."

Deathblow ®, ™ & © Aegis Entertainment, Inc. dba Wildstorm Productions, Inc.

LEE'S NEW IMPRINT

Man-o-man, is this Jim Lee guy busy. In addition to picking creative teams, and launching a low-priced comic line, Mr. Lee has announced a new imprint of creator owned comics. It will be published under the title of **Homage Comics** and will launch in August with the return of **Kurt Busiek's Astro City.**

"Homage Comics is something I've wanted to do for a long time," said Lee. "I want to publish the best of the creator-owned projects out there." The new line will not be part of the Image Comics family, where most of Lee's WildStorm Productions projects are located. Diamond Comics will be the exclusive distributor of the line.

Astro City will return to the comics world as Volume 2, Number 1 of the series. Returning will be writer Kurt Busiek and artist Brent Anderson. Will Blyberg will join them as inker, and Alex Ross will continue to paint the covers.

Busiek is delighted that his book has found a new home. He's also very flattered that Lee chose his title to launch the imprint. "I'm glad Jim has this kind of faith in us, and I hope we'll be able to make Homage a terrific home for creator-owned work."

ANOTHER FRIGGIN' CROSSOVER

Yes it's true. Just when you thought the inter-company crossover craze was over its returned to bite you in the butt. However, we're not talking about a meeting between the Inferior Five and Impossible Man. We're talking about a crossover series that everyone's been clamoring for.

Beginning in June, **Marvel Comics** and **Image Comics** will begin a series of crossover events featuring some of the biggest of both companies. Over the course of the next year fans will be treated to a number of exciting pairings, including: **X-Men/WildC.A.T.S., Youngblood/X-Force,** and **Gen 13/Generation X.** The coolest part of the team-ups will be that they'll reunite creators and characters that have been long separated. For example, fans will be able to see Jim Lee draw the X-Men again and Rob Liefeld pencil Cable and X-Force. They will also see, for the first time in years, other Image creators interpret the characters that they worked on at Marvel.

"I couldn't be more excited," says Rob Liefeld, President of Extreme Studios and one of the founders of Image Comics. " The opportunity to draw Cable and Company and have them interact with Youngblood and Prophet is a dream come true."

The happenings begin with **Prophet/Cable** shipping in June. The story is written by revered Prophet scribe Chuck Dixon and co-plotted and illustrated by Rob Liefeld, who created both characters. The story will involve the two heroes time-hopping exploits and what happens when their paths collide (And we don't think they'll be comparing china patterns over tea.). Liefeld says that this is an opportunity he's looking forward to because it will be the first time he's ever drawn Cable solo.

Other crossovers slated for '96 release are:

Youngblood/X-Force — Written by Youngblood scribe Eric Stephenson and illustrated by Roger Cruz;

Badrock/Spiderman — Written by Dan Jurgens and drawn by Marat Mychaels and Al Vey;

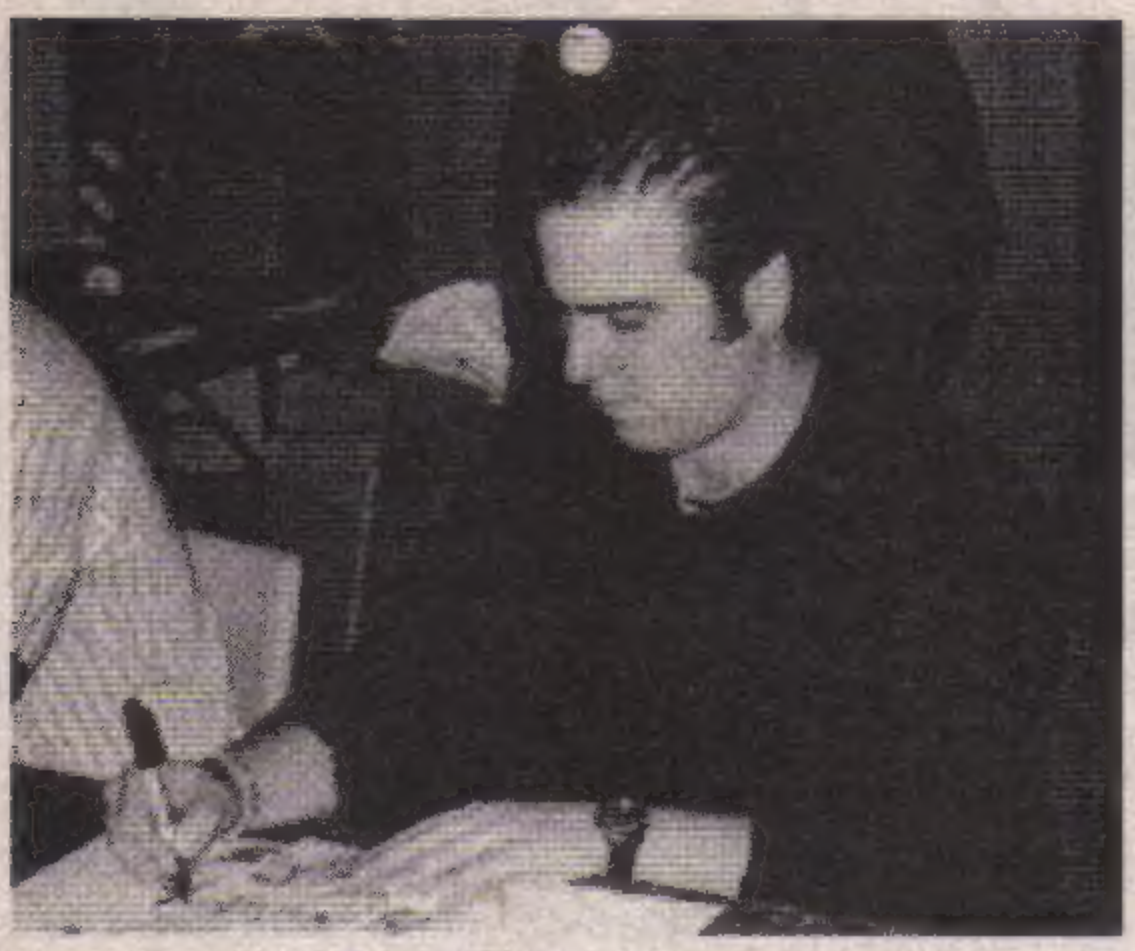
Badrock/Wolverine — Written by Jim Valentino and drawn by Chap Yaep.

Future crossovers will feature **Shadowhawk,** the **Savage Dragon** and **Cyberforce.** We here at **Comics Focus** are looking forward to these releases so we have something to read during writers' meetings.

Gen 13 ©, ™ & © Aegis Entertainment, Inc. dba Wildstorm Productions, Inc.

NEW YORK SHOW NO-GO

Big news at this year's New York Comic Book Spectacular —THERE WASN'T ONE!!! The show, which was to be held the weekend of March 1st at the New York Coliseum, was unexpectedly canceled only one or two days before its opening. Information has been scarce on why it closed so quickly; however, the word on the street has it that it had something to do with missing floor plans and the fire marshal. Needless to say, hundreds of comic industry people, including Rob Liefeld and Stan Lee, as well as hundreds of thousands of fans,



Event Comics' Jimmy Palmiotti signing furiously at the church show.

were literally left out in the cold. Including your faithful editor-in-chief, who spent three hours slogging through another East Coast snowstorm to get from Philadelphia to the Big Apple. Three freakin' hours!! And when I got out of the subway station all I saw were people handing out leaflets! No, I'm not THAT bitter about it! But, I digress...

The good news is that dealers and fans did not go away empty handed that weekend. Many outlets in and around the city were kind, and quick, enough to plan alternate shows. One such was at the Church of St. Paul the Apostle, right around the corner from the Coliseum on 9th Ave. and 59th Street. While it didn't have the scope of what the Coliseum show would have had, the admission was free and quite a number of dealers, artists, and independent comic companies did fill the church's huge multipurpose room.

Among those who made it were: Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti of Event Comics; Crusade Comics' Bill Tucci, and Mushroom Comics. We here at Comics Focus tip our hats to those dealers and creators who roughed it out.

At press time, Great Eastern Conventions, the sponsors of the show, had not rescheduled.

MUSHROOM'S SPIDER-PERSON

Gabe Jimenez, Publisher of Mushroom Comics, was so happy with last year's reviews of his Araknis mini-series that he's decided to bring ol' eight-legs back for a regular run.

The fun began back in March with issue #0, which gave readers the origin of Araknis. The monthly series will begin in April with issue #1 and will bring back the villains that plagued our hero last year. The Ortiz Brothers, Mike & Mario (or Mario & Mike, you choose), will also be back, along with new writer Andrew Grossberg.

You need more information, faithful Comics Focus reader? Just head over to their Website address: http://www.insv/.com/mushroom .

The boys of Mushroom. L-R: Perry S. Yen, Mike Ortiz, Mario Ortiz, Publisher Gabe Jimenez.

The Atom™ & © 1996 DC Comics

ATOM & THE TITANS

You thought it was over. You thought that after 30 years of history DC's **New Titans** would never come back again in one form or another. You believed that after Marv Wolfman stepped down from the title it would be over. Didn't you, huh? Well, snap outta it! The Titans are returning; however, they won't be your father's Titans.

This summer will see the launch of a new Teen Titans series, the third one to bear this name. And if you're not excited enough already, then get ready. Taking over the creative duties will be none other than (drum roll, please) Dan Jurgens, who has worked on such titles as **Superman, Zero Hour,** and **Sensational Spider-Man.**

"This book will have ties to all the previous versions of the title," Jurgens said. "Part of the enjoyment will be how all of those elements have a history and combine to make something even stronger now." Jurgens will script and pencil the series. He will be joined by someone who's very familiar with the Titans universe — inker George Perez. Perez, along with co-plotter Marv Wolfman, helped reinvigorate the Titans during the early 1980's.

Now, if your thinking that heroes like Robin, Superboy, or Impulse will be joining the group, don't. The only established character appearing will be **The Atom** (Ray Palmer), who was transformed back into a 16-year-old during the events in Zero Hour. He'll be leading a whole new generation of characters. But don't threat, various former Titans will make guest appearances.

The Teen Titans is slated for an August release.

SPANDEX RETURNS

Spanderific! **Flex-Woman** and **Spandex Girl,** the Aerobic Duo known as **Spandex Tights,** are coming off a short vacation and returning to their old home — Lost Cause Productions — with original creators Bryan J.L. Glass (writer) and Sky Owens (artist) tagging along. Their new run will begin in April with issue #6. Lost Cause will also produce **Spandex Tights Presents: BLACK SPANDEX,** a 2 issue mini-series that lambastes the Bad Girl genre. It will be written by Glass and penciled by Bob Dix. Cover art will be provided by Rick (Spider-Man 2099) Leonardi and Dave (WildC.A.T.S.) Johnson. Black Spandex is slated for a summer release.

Black Spandex™ & © 1996 Bryan J.L. Glass

Artwork from Lost Cause Productions - Black Spandex

X-MEN™ X MARKS THE SPOT

A SHORT, LENGTHY HISTORY OF THE X-UNIVERSE

mutation (mu-ta shun), n. 1. change; modification; deviation. 2. in Biology, a) an abrupt shift in inheritable characteristics; b) an individual marked by such a shift; mutant.
(The Pocket Webster Dictionary, 1990)

Feared, alienated heroes whose powers come from genetic mutations? Who would have ever thought such a concept would one day become extremely popular and well known, not only within the comic book world, but beyond to encompass toys, cartoons, and video games. The X-Men have indeed achieved this star status, and have left an indelible mark along the way. But while they're superstars now, they started off with very humble beginnings . . .

ORIGINS

It began in the early 1960's. The creative team of Stan "The Man" Lee and Jack "King" Kirby came up with the idea to create a different group of heroes - namely mutants. The concept of heroes whose powers came from their genes was a new one for Marvel. Most of the heroes Stan and Jack had previously created received their powers in some scientific (Fantastic Four, Hulk, Spider-Man) or mystical (Thor) way. They wanted this new group of heroes to be teenagers who were just learning how to use their latent powers, and were being trained for a specific mission in life. Lee wanted them to be known as "The Mutants"; however, Publisher Martin Goodman said young readers could be confused by the name. So, Lee instead came up with the title of X-Men, which surrounded the team in an aura of mystery.

X-Men #1 debuted in September of 1963, the same month as another team book, The Avengers. The original team that made up the X-Men were: Cyclops (Scott Summers), who could emit ruby-colored beams from his eyes; The Angel (Warren Worthington III), who, while a teen, grew feathered wings out of his shoulder blades; Marvel Girl (Jean Grey), who had the powers of telepathy and telekinesis; Iceman (Bobby Drake), who could project intense cold from his body; and Beast (Hank

The concept of heroes whose powers came from their genes was a new one for Marvel.

History was constantly being made by Claremont and his artist partners during a four or five year span.

McCoy), who had the intellect of Einstein but the strength and agility of a gorilla. They attended Professor Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters in Salem Center, New York. It's was here that they trained and learned how to control their powers through the teachings of Charles Xavier (Professor X), who's goal it was to get mankind and mutants to live together in peace.

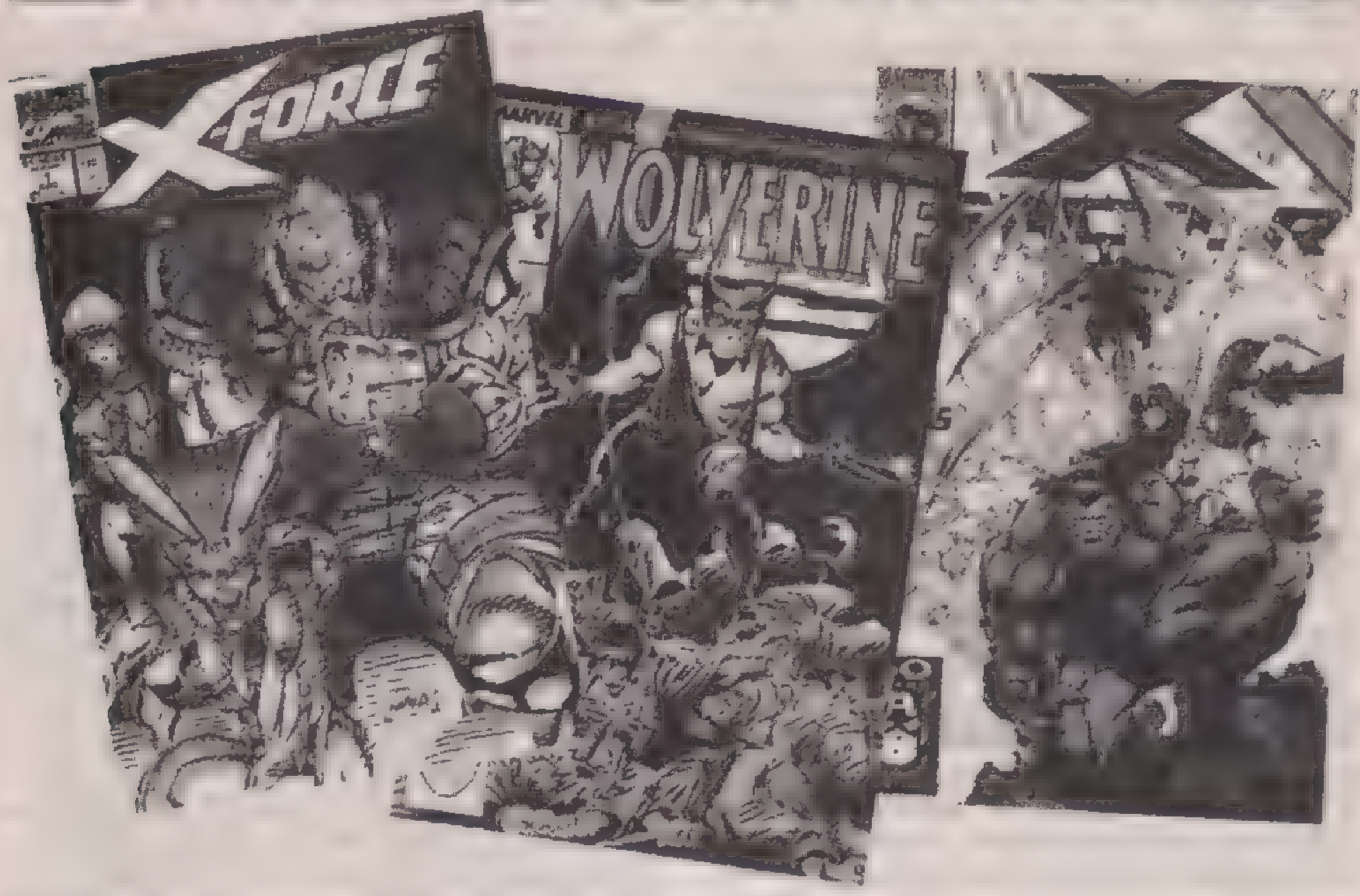
The title didn't take off like the creators expected it to. By the late 60s it was barely holding on, and there was talk of canceling the series, despite having talent such as artists Kirby (issues 1-17) & Neal Adams (issues 56-63), and writers Lee (issues 1-19) & Roy Thomas (issues 20-44, 55-64, 66) on hand. So, in March of 1970, instead of canceling the title, the series stopped producing original stories and instead reprinted issues #12-45. However, those Merry Mutants weren't out of the Marvel Universe altogether. Between 1970 & '75 they appeared in titles like **Amazing Adventures** (where Beast became the furry, blue one that we know and love today), **Hulk**, **Avengers**, and **Captain America**.

It seemed like someone was watching them from above, waiting for something BIG to happen.

CLAREMONT & THE REVIVAL

That something big came in May 1975 under the guise of **Giant Size X-Men #1**. The idea to revive the title came about when Marvel President Al Landau was looking for a team that was made up of members from several different countries. Roy Thomas thought of the X-Men and turned the idea over to creators Len Wein and Dave Cockrum. Wein and Cockrum decided to retain Cyclops and Professor X while adding several new members for the book. The new X-Men included Wolverine (Logan), the diminutive (only 5'5" tall) Canadian who was created by Wein for The Incredible Hulk. Wolverine possessed an adamantium skeleton, razor sharp claws, and an accelerated healing factor. Other new members were: Colossus (Peter Rasputin), a Russian who could transform his skin

history of x-universe



into a steel-like substance; the beautiful African goddess Storm (Ororo Munroe), who had the psionic ability to manipulate the weather; and the German Nightcrawler (Kurt Wagner), a former circus freak with the ability of teleportation.

Needless to say, **Giant Size X-Men** became a huge hit and the public asked for more original stories. Writer Wein, however, didn't stay with the book due to his time constraints as editor-in-chief. Beginning with issue #94 the writing chores would go to his assistant - a gentleman named Chris Claremont - who was not only instrumental in reviving the X-Men from their prior slump but expanding their universe as well.

X-Men #94 was the second appearance of the new X-Men, including three others - Banshee (Sean Cassidy), Sunfire (Shiro Yoshida), who resigned that issue, and Thunderbird (John Proudstar), a native American mutant. Proudstar, unfortunately, died in that issue, but the other new X-Men continued on through many adventures dealing with evils old (Juggernaut, Magneto) and new (Black Tom, Hellfire Club, Sh'iar Empire).

History was constantly being made by Claremont and his artist partners during a four or five year span. In issue 101, he and artist Cockrum joined Jean Grey with a powerful alien force to transform her into Phoenix. In 1980, under the co-plotting of Claremont and artist John Byrne, Phoenix became the megalomaniac Dark Phoenix, who went ahead and single-handedly destroyed a populated alien star system. This story line resulted in the 'The Dark Phoenix Saga', a multi-part epic that people still talk about today. In the climax to that story (issue 137) Jean Grey went on trial for committing alien genocide, and in the end died by her own powers. After this, you think they would have taken a breather, but no. Four issues later, in the two-part 'Days of Future Past' saga, Claremont and Byrne revealed a depressing future for the X-Men and introduced two new characters, Rachel Summers and Rouge, who would play important roles in the title. By the time of Byrne's departure from the book, the title had been changed to **The Uncanny X-Men**.

Expansion

As the title's popularity continued to soar, editor-in-chief Jim Shooter decided that a second X-book should be added. So Claremont, along with his editor Louise Simonson, created a bunch of new students that Professor Xavier could mold. In 1982 the reading public was introduced to Cannonball, Karma, Mirage, Sunspot and Wolfsbane in **The New Mutants** graphic novel, which became an ongoing series in March of 1983. The title lasted 100 issues and included many talented people throughout its run, including writer Simonson, and artists Bob McLeod, Bill Sienkiewicz, and Rob Liefeld. Liefeld, the last to do the book, took some of the old New Mutants, added some new characters, and created **X-Force** in the early 1990's.

The expansion of the X-Universe had only just begun. In 1986, under the writing talents of Louise Simonson and her artist husband Walter, the original team of X-Men, including the seemingly de-

ceased Jean Grey, got back together to form X-Factor. Wolverine, the most popular of the X-Men, got his own series in 1988. Writer Claremont took this mutant book in a different direction, making it a little darker and grittier to match the hero's mood. In that same year, Claremont and co-plotter Alan Davis brought Nightcrawler, Kitty Pryde, and Rachel Summers over to England, joined them with the British hero Captain Britain, and gave the reading public a lighter view of mutant teams in Excalibur #1.

The X-Men certainly weren't sitting on their laurels while all this expansion was happening. By issue #200 of the series, a mortally injured Professor Xavier had decided to leave Earth with his alien love, Lilandra. Former arch-nemesis Magneto decided to take over his place at the institute, which didn't make many of the X-Men too happy. The roster was changing as well. Heroes new (Gambit,, Jubilee, Psylocke, Longshot) and old (Forge, Havok, Banshee, Dazzler) joined the team. They faced a slew of new villains, including Mr. Sinister and Apocalypse, who are causing the X-Men problems to this day. By early 1991, Professor Xavier returned from his space journey, and Magneto became a villain once again. Another milestone was about to occur in the X-Universe.

August 1991 saw the premier of X-Men, a companion to the immensely popular main book. Issue #1, co-plotted by Chris Claremont and artist Jim Lee, featured a number of familiar faces that appeared in another #1 nearly thirty years ago: the original team members as well as the villain Magneto. Also in this issue, Professor Xavier decided to split the team into two different squads. Blue squad consisted of Cyclops, Beast, Rouge, Wolverine, Psylocke, and Gambit, while the Gold squad included Storm, Jean Grey, Angel and Iceman. The X-Factor team went through some changes as well. As of issue #71 the team became a quasi-governmental organization with five new

Claremont took this mutant book in a different direction, making it a little darker and grittier to match the hero's mood.

history of x-universe

members: Havok and Polaris, who were part of the original X-Men organization at one time or another; Wolfsbane, a former member of the New Mutants; and Strong Guy and Multiple Man, who were new to the X-Universe.

Departure & the Future

By the end of 1991 the X-books were more popular than ever. And, after over 17 years of ideas, Chris Claremont decided to leave the X-Universe to pursue other projects. The comic industry was saddened. Fans were asking themselves whether or not the universe that he had stitched together for nearly two decades would fall apart without his guidance. Fortunately, the books were left in good hands as writers John Byrne, Scott Lobdell, Fabian Nicieza and Mark Waid took over the reins of the world's favorite mutants.

Since Claremont's departure, the X-Men and their friends have not slowed down. Readers saw many mutants fall ill to 'The Legacy Virus', watched as Scott Summers proposed to Jean Grey (Uncanny X-Men" #308) and then married her (X-Men #30), and marveled as the 'Age of Apocalypse' saga took place over the first half of 1995. We were even introduced to a future band of mutants in X-Men 2099.

As we entered into the final stages of the 20th Century, a fifth team of young mutants was created to prepare mutant-kind for the next 100 years. Known as Generation X, the group is comprised of former X-Man Jubilee as well as new characters Buff, Chamber, Husk, M, Mondo, Penanance, Skin and Synch.. Instead of being located in Salem Center, the Xavier Institute has been relocated to Massachusetts. As well, Professor Xavier has asked for former X-Man Banshee and former Hellfire Club member White Queen to train and advise these teenagers in how to control their abilities. Eventually, these heroes will become true X-Men and lead the way of peace between mutants and humans.

With its rich history and innovative style, its no wonder X-Men and all of its associated titles do so well and why they have captured the hearts and minds of many a comic book reader. The road ahead looks bright for many future X-Men adventures and many readers eagerly await them. ⊗

A fifth team of young mutants was created to prepare mutant-kind for the next 100 years.

Snikt!! A Man Called Wolverine

By Brian Peterson

'I'm the best there is at what I do. But what I do isn't very nice'

(Quote from Wolverine, from the 1982 mini-series bearing his name)

Since being introduced, one member of the X-Men has been extremely popular with fans. That hero is Wolverine.

Wolverine is a unique enigma: Both savage and honorable; prone to fits of uncontrollable rage and disciplined self-control; blue-collared yet very worldly. His past is a mire of mystery — even he doesn't remember parts of it. For example, the only real name he has gone by is Logan - whether that is his first or last name remains to be seen. He has also occasionally gone by the name Patch. Yet, ever since his introduction, he has grown in popularity and become one of the most well known - and liked - X-Men.

Wolverine's origins began in 1974. Marvel wanted a Canadian hero, because sales were doing fairly well there. Roy Thomas, who had come up with the name Wolverine, talked the idea over with writer Len Wein, who was given free reign to develop the character. Wein made Wolverine short (5'5" tall), powerful, and, like his animal namesake, fierce. He was given hyper-acute senses, such as smell and hearing, as well as a super-quick healing factor (which was an afterthought by Wein and Thomas, who were preparing him for something bigger). Wein also incorporated one other surprise to the character - retractable metal claws that would become Wolverine's trademark. It was later revealed that not only were his claws made of the fictional metal adamantium, but his very skeleton was fused to it, making his bones virtually unbreakable. After creating Wolverine, Wein & Thomas immediately threw him into the Marvel Universe.

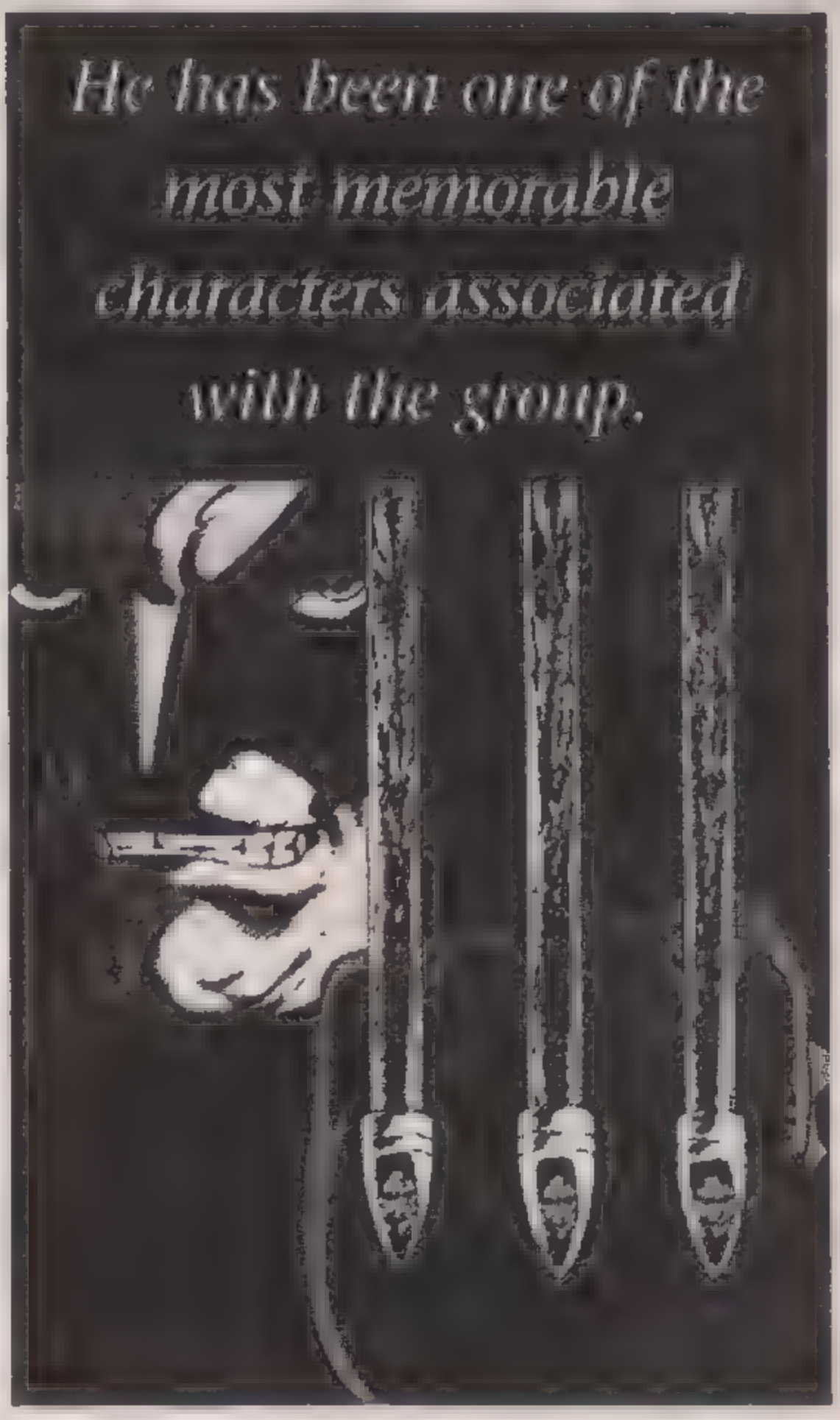
Wein was writing several titles for Marvel at the time, one of them being The Incredible Hulk. And, on the last page of issue #180, Wolverine made his debut as "Weapon X", an agent of the

His past is a mire of mystery— even he doesn't remember parts of it.

wolverine

Canadian government. Wolverine sported the familiar yellow and blue costume with black tiger stripes - one that was designed by then Marvel art director John Romita and drawn in the **Hulk #180 & 181** by Herb Trimpe. .Although he has worn other costumes, the yellow and blue one remains today and is considered, by many, to be the best one. About a year after his Hulk appearance Wolverine turned up again,- in **Giant Size X-Men #1** (1975) - as one of Charles Xavier's newly recruited members. Since that auspicious debut, he has been one of the most memorable characters associated with the group.

By the early 1980's Wolverine became one of the first X-Men to break out into his own solo adventures. The 1982 Wolverine mini-series, by Chris Claremont and artist Frank Miller, delved into Logan's adventures in Japan and his quest to get back the hand of the woman he loved. The mini-series went over well. By 1988 he was given his own ongoing title, which has recently passed the 100 issue mark. His solo adventures were also recorded in the weekly series Marvel Comics Presents. It was here that readers learned the partial origins of how he became "Weapon X" (issues 72-84).



Wolverine has gone through numerous changes throughout his career. One of the most severe was the loss of his adamantium skeleton in **X-Men #25**, when Magneto drew all of the metal out of Wolverine's body, leaving him badly injured and without his healing factor. Later issues revealed that his claws were actually bone encased in steel. Recently, in **Wolverine #100**, Logan was given the chance to regain his adamantium shell, but the cost was the rebirth of the villain Apocalypse. In the end he rejected the fusing of metal to bone and reverted to his more animalistic form. Will he ever return to the Logan fans love and adore? Only time - and future storylines - will tell.

Wolverine has been around for more than 20 years now. Given his continued popularity, he will most likely be around for (at least) 20 more years. As he puts it: I'm the best there is at what I do. No doubt that is one reason he remains a mainstay of the Marvel Universe. Given his popularity, temperament, and claws - even bone claws - who's going to argue with him?

LIFE GOES ON

THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF CHRIS CLAREMONT

"The book had absolutely no expectations whatsoever"

What more can be said about Chris Claremont, the man who took the X-Men through nearly two decades of triumph and tragedy. Um, really nothing that hasn't been pretty much said already. That's why we here at Comics Focus proposed a brilliant scheme to interview Claremont directly. We are quite proud of ourselves. In fact, our egos are so big right now that we are having trouble fitting through the doorways.

COMICS FOCUS: Did you voluntarily leave the X-Men, or were you kicked off the series?

CHRIS CLAREMONT: It was a mutual decision on both Marvel's and my part.

CF: Were you getting tired of writing the title?

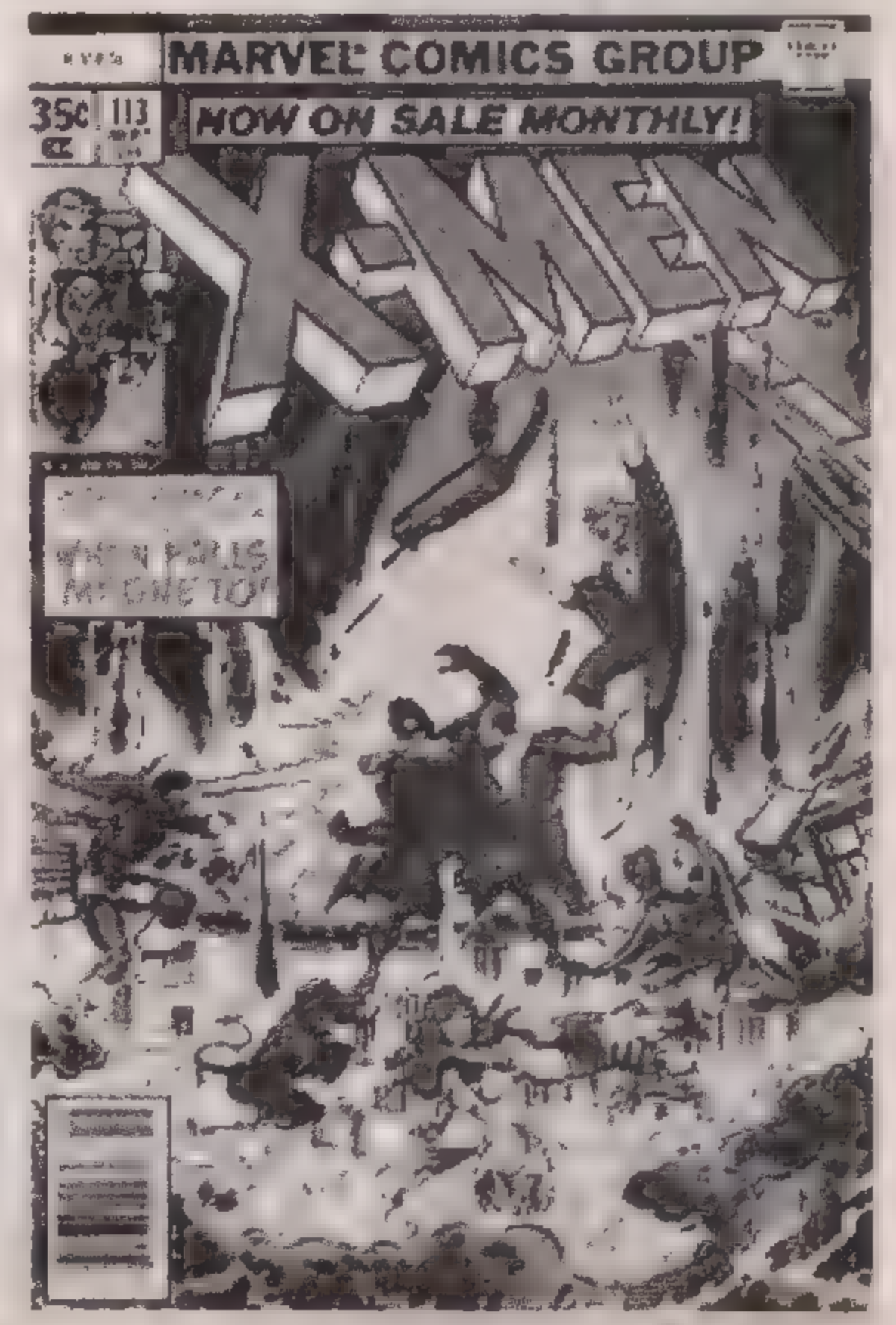
CC: Well, at this point I think it's old news, but I think it had reached a stage where Marvel had a very specific vision for the book and I had a specific vision for the book . . . and they did not mesh as comfortably as they did in the past. Both sides decided that it was time to call it quits.

CF: Do you miss it?

CC: You don't do something for 18 years of your life, you don't stay associated with a company for your entire working life, without missing it one way or another. Of course I miss it.

CF: You were on the book for almost two decades, which is amazing in today's comic world, where creators do six-issue stints and move on. What made you stay there for so long to do the same characters month after month?

CC: They weren't the same characters. The misunderstanding was that it was a static, un-evolving title. I suspect if you look at a X-Men #94 and #260 you'll see a marked difference in the portrayal of the characters. Not that they turned into different people, but they are the sum of their experiences of their lives. They have grown, have changed, have hopefully matured. Wolverine was not the same ten years after I took over the book as when I started, neither was Storm, Cyclops, or Xavier. They had just gone through a sequence of experiences that markedly changed their outlook on life. Kitty Pryde, when she walked into the team at the end of issue #138, was a markedly different character when we began Excalibur. Not simply because in her own life she was a year-and-a-half older, but because she had seen so much and done so much and been a party to events of such importance that they could not help but change her inside. Her changes, in turn, sparked changes in the characters around her.



That's the nature of writing. I stayed with the book because I had stories to tell. I have stories to tell to this day. That's the mark, I hope, of good writing, and a good writer, and good characters . . . which they were.

CF: When you were given the assignment of writing the book by your boss (Len Wein), did you have any idea where you were going to take the members of the X-Men?

CC: I don't think we had any idea at all, other than that we had to get it out in a week. As I've said in previous interviews, the beauty of X-Men in that first five years, with Dave (Cockrum) and me and then John Byrne and I, was that since the book had absolutely no expectations whatsoever — it was a mid-list, bimonthly title that barely escaped cancellation more often than not — there was no one looking over our shoulder. Success for us was getting the book out on a bimonthly schedule and earning our money back.

There was really no interest in the title from the 'Powers That Be' because they were all focused, as was traditional, on the A list titles: Hulk, Spider-Man, Thor, Fantastic Four, that type of stuff. X-Men was sort of scooting beneath the radar. It was the same sort of luxury as when Frank Miller took over Daredevil; no one had any real objection to the work he was doing because the title had nothing to lose. He couldn't hurt it more than it already had been hurt. Likewise, Dave and I couldn't hurt the X-Men. We couldn't leave the X-Men any worse than we had found it. So, nobody really noticed, nobody really cared. Had anyone had the slightest inkling of what it would become, neither of us would have been allowed anywhere near it.

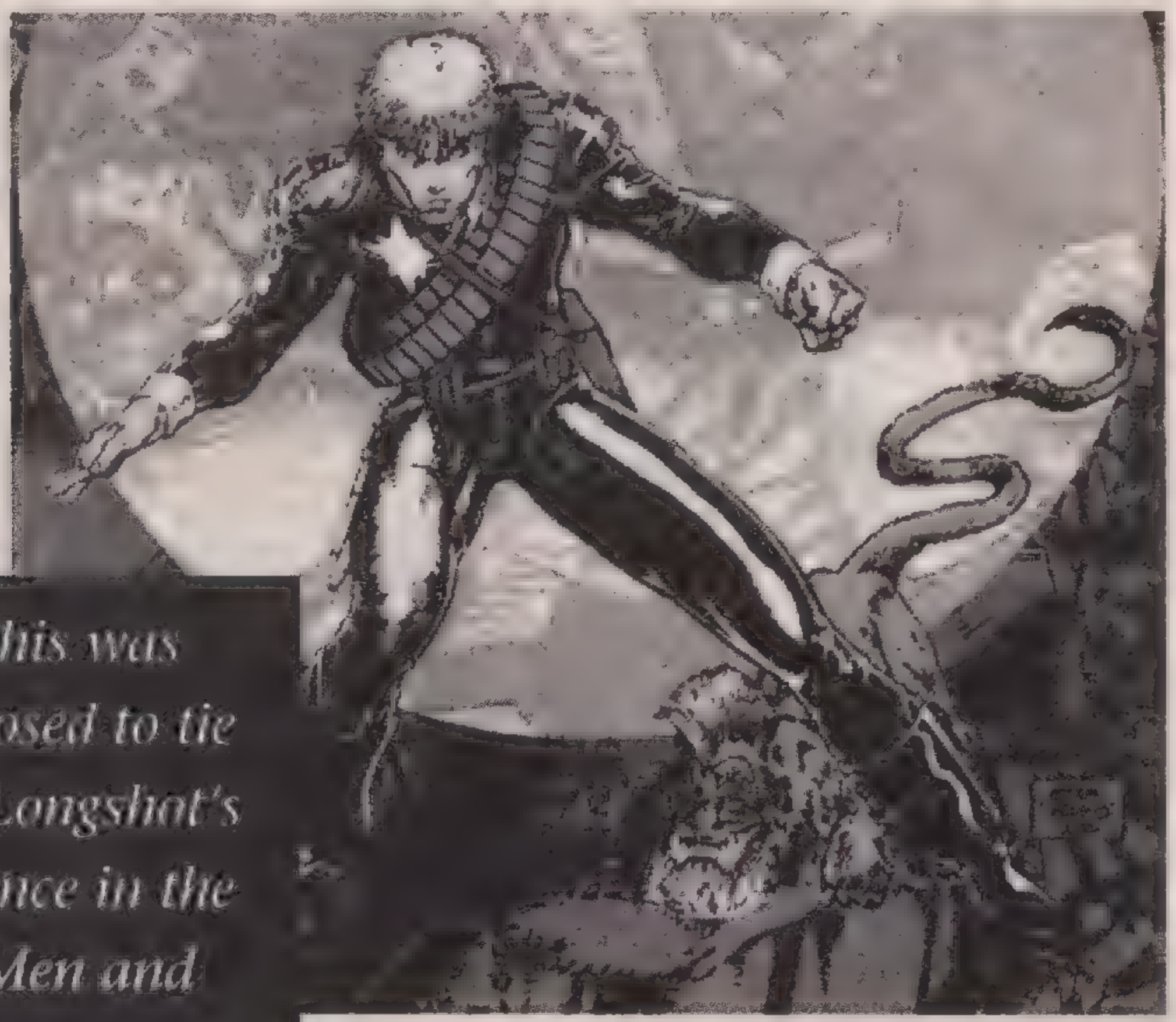
CF: Did you like the series before you jumped on? Did you read any of the old issues?

CC: I enjoyed the series, but of course I read the old books. I mean, what's incumbent on any professional writer taking over a new series is to, at least, make him- or herself passing familiar with the work that has gone before. It's not expressing a value judgment one way or another. It is, however, building a context of character and events for you to work from.

I really have no patience, and not much respect, for writers who boast about the fact that they never read a previous issue of a title they're taking over, because how do they know the characters they're writing? That exhibits such a tremendous lack of respect for the work that has proceeded you on the title that it almost disqualifies the work right off the bat. You may not like what's happened before, you may not think it's very good, you may have not chosen to read it as a fan, but it's all part of the history of the character. And you need to know that, if only to find out what mistakes not to make.

CF: Over the years you wrote a number of important story arcs — "Dark Phoenix Saga", "Days of Future Past". Do any of the X-related projects you did stick out in your mind as ones you really enjoyed?

"I really have no patience, and not much respect, for writers who boast about the fact that they never read a previous issue of a title they're taking over"



"This was supposed to tie into Longshot's presence in the X-Men and his departure"

CC: Well, the X-Men graphic novel (God Loves, Man Kills). If I had to pick one book that summed it all up, that would be it. I also enjoyed doing the Wolverine mini-series, the Wolverine/Kitty Pryde mini-series and "The Asgard Wars". The fact is, in my own mind, the entire canon is one story. When I'm asked what my favorite story arc is, I say 'X-Men #94 to #279', with sidebars in-between. In my mind I was writing the history of the lives of these people and the world in which they lived. In one sense it was a vast, sprawling, occasionally messy, never-ending story.

CF: Stan Lee's original premise for the book was that the X-Men were being trained to not only forge a mutual understanding between mutants and humans, but to stop evil mutants from destroying those plans. As the book grew, did you see it differently?

CC: The moral theme of the book was there, part and parcel, from Stan's first issue . . . the idea that mutants were outcasts seemingly because of an accident at birth. This was a marked differentiation between them as characters and someone like Spider-Man or the Fantastic Four, the more accident-oriented, or accident-generated, superheroes. It was always part of the book's theme, and was touched on by Stan Lee, Roy Thomas, Arnold Drake, and by Len Wein.

If I made it a more dominant thread in the subtext, and in the plot structure, I had the advantage of staying on the book three times longer than all of the previous writers put together. So, the sheer weight of events stands in my favor. But I think the X-Men have always been differentiated, and to a large measure enriched, by the fact that the concepts derive from a theme that has tremendous relevance in the real world. You don't have to graft on a story arc to make a moral point. The existence of the characters, and of the book itself, is a moral point.

To me, that's the essence of the graphic novel **God Loves, Man Kills.** That's why that same story would not be as effective written for the Avengers, or the Fantastic Four, or the Justice League of America. It might be for Superman, because he's an immigrant. The idea of prejudice, of racism, and the negative effects it has on society at large and in specific, and the positive statement that can

"Life has alot of dangling plotlines"

be made by standing up against it, is what helped give X-Men its tremendous popularity over the years.

CF: You left a number of plotlines dangling during your time on the book . . .

CC: Life has alot of dangling plotlines.

CF: Is that why you made it that way in the comic book? To make it more realistic?

CC: No, I just looked on it as making sure I had something to do next year. There were always things to come back to.

Bear in mind, at a minimum the X-Men are seven interacting characters. When you factor in the Blue and Gold teams that were created when I left, that's fifteen characters right there. You have Excalibur, that's a half-dozen. That doesn't even begin to count X-Factor, and X-Force. There's something like fifty or sixty characters running around various titles, various aspects of the Marvel Universe. You can't begin to give those many characters the air time they deserve, especially if, in my case, you're focusing on a single monthly

Artwork from Chris Claremont's Sovereign Seven.

CREATIVITY NEVER RESTS

If you thought that Chris Claremont, after nearly two decades of scripting **The Uncanny X-Men**, dropped out of the comic book business to become a tour guide at Disney World's Jungle Ride, you, my Comics Focus friend, are sadly mistaken. Matter of fact, since he left the title, he's barely had enough time to breathe.

Since leaving Marvel, Chris has written the **Star Trek** 25th Anniversary graphic novel "Debt of Honor", for DC Comics, as well as a Next Generation sequel, "Cry, Vengeance", which was published in 1994. Also in 1994 he premiered Chris Claremont's Huntsman, a creator-owned project which made its debut in a four-issue story arc of Jim Lee's **WildC.A.T.S.** from Image Comics. It was followed over the winter of 94/95 by a second 3-issue arc, that teamed Chris with former X-Men colleague, Marc Silvestri, in Silvestri's **Cyberforce.**

In 1995, Claremont joined DC Comics and launched another creator-owned project: **Sovereign Seven.** The book was the first superhero series since William Moulton Marston's Wonder Woman to be creator-owned yet fully integrated into, and interactive with, the mainstream DC Universe. It is currently enjoying a successful run under Claremont's scripting and the artistic talents of penciler Dwayne Turner and inker Chris Ivy.

In the summer of 1995 Chris concluded his twelve-part limited series for Dark Horse, **Alien/Predator: THE DEADLIEST OF THE SPECIES.** The storyline featured another creator-owned character from Claremont — Ash Parnaoll, a.k.a. Renegade — who is projected to star in her own Dark Horse series later this year.

Now, if you thought Chris just scripted comic books . . .well, I have a lovely piece of Florida swampland that I could sell to you. Since 1972, when he made his first sale to The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, Claremont has been hooked into writing prose. In 1987, he released his first science fiction novel, **FirstFlight**, the story of a young woman astronaut in the 21st century. The book, published by Berkley/Ace, is currently in its seventh printing, and has produced two sequels, **Grounded** (1991) and **Sundowner** (1994). In late 1994, Bantam Books published **Dragon Moon**, a dark fantasy novel by Chris and his wife, Beth Fleisher.

The summer of 1995 saw the publication of **Shadow Moon**, for Bantam Books. The novel, the first volume of a dark fantasy trilogy, **The Saga of the Shadow War**, was written in collaboration with Star Wars' creator George Lucas. The second part of the trilogy, **Shadow Dawn**, will be released this summer.

"It's been five years since I left the book. The X-Men have evolved into a whole different set of characters"

title, which I was for most of the run. So you store things away. For example, 'When will I do Nightcrawler's origin?'. Well, we started to do his origin and the story died on us. We set up, we started it rolling, tried to hammer it into something of value, and it died. This happens. Once in awhile you'll run into a story that's a major dud, it just will not fly, no matter how much air you pipe into the wings. So, we rewrote the ending of the story and instead did one with Rachel Summers, Wolverine and the Hellfire Club, which led up to the "Mutant Massacre": which turned out to be a much more powerful and effective storyline.

That, in turn, was supposed to lead into a mini-series which would tell the story of what happened between Rachel's disappearance from the X-Men in issue #209 and her reappearance in the Excalibur special edition. This was supposed to tie into Longshot's presence in the X-Men and his departure from that book to star in his own ongoing series. Except, for various reasons, the mini-series never got finished and the Longshot series never got launched. So, suddenly, you're left with dangles that weren't intentional but are there nonetheless.

Plots come and go for all sorts of reasons. Threads dangle for all sorts of reasons. The writer assumes that there will always be time to tie them up in neat little knots. Things that are meant to come to fruition fifty issues down the line will happen. I always assumed I'd be around to do it; unfortunately, I wasn't. And the circumstances of my departure were such that there was no opportunity to tie up those loose ends. There was no practical way of doing it.

CF: If (X-Men editor) Bob Harras came up to you right now and said, "Come back to the X-Men. You'd have full reign over the book.", would you do it?

CC: Well, as Sean Connery said, 'Never Say Never Again'. First, I doubt there's any such thing as 'free reign', but it would have to depend on the circumstances. It's been five years since I left the book. The X-Men have evolved into a whole different set of characters. I could not automatically say no, but, at the same token, I couldn't automatically say yes.

CF: You created, and currently write, Sovereign Seven, for DC Comics. Did you learn any lessons from X-Men that you put in your current project?

CC: Oh, yes, one very fundamental lesson, and you can find it in the beginning of the comic book. When you pick up an issue of X-Men it says 'X-Men, Copyright and Trademark Marvel Comics Group'. In every issue of Sovereign Seven it reads, 'Copyright and Trademark Chris Claremont'. It is my book . . .I own it. They are my characters, this is my property.

It is the first instance, in my experience, where a mainstream publisher (i.e. DC, Marvel) has approached the relationship with the creator as a collaboration rather than as an employer. We are partners in this, DC and I. We both have a tremendous amount to gain from the success of the series, we both have an equivalent amount to lose by its failure. But there is an equivalence of risk,

Chris Claremont's Huntsman made his debut in Jim Lee's WildC.A.T.S.

Huntsman™ & © 1996 Chris Claremont

of reward, that does not exist in the case of a book like the X-Men. Marvel takes what they assume is the bulk of the risk, and they take the lion's share of the reward. They have all the control. In Sovereign that's not the case, and I think it's a far more equitable, appropriate, positive way of, not only doing business, but of bringing superior work to the readership.

I have a significant vested interest in making this series work that goes beyond sheer pride. This is mine . . .no one is going to take it away from me. I can destroy it myself through either ineptitude or bad design, but no one, without my say so, can take it away from me. That is the most fundamental and lasting lesson from 20 years experience in mainstream comics.

CF: Do you see any of the X-Men's characteristics in the heroes you created for Sovereign?

CC: Heroes all have some certain common attributes, or else they wouldn't be heroes. As for whether or not these characters are extensions of the X-Men: I don't think so. They come from a different place of being, a different origin, a different reason for being on Earth, a different approach to doing business as it were — the X-Men never had to work for a living. . .the Sovereigns do. By the same token, since all these characters grow from the same creative genus, i.e. my head, you could probably find some similarities of character and theme and style. I'm writing them. I can modify my style but I can't change it because it's my style. It's like asking Van Gogh to paint like someone else. He might be able to do it, but basically at heart he's Van Gogh.

CF: Do you have advice for anyone who wants to go out there to write a comics?

CC: You don't have enough tape. Basically, comics, whether writing or drawing, is a craft as much as an art form. To think you can just walk in off the street and write a great comic, or draw a great comic, is as arrogant as thinking you can walk in off the street and do brain surgery. You may indeed have the talent, but talent without craft, without the sense of maturity and responsibility that comes with craft, may get you through the day but it won't get you through the year. ⊗

"The idea of prejudice, of racism, and the negative effects it has on society at large and in specific, and the positive statement that can be made by standing up against it, is what helped give X-Men its tremendous popularity"

WAIDING IN:

AN INTERVIEW WITH NEW X-MEN WRITER

MARK WAID

After critical success on Flash and Captain America, Mark Waid is now being sucked into one of the most complicated, yet character rich, Marvel Universes: the X-Universe. What does he have in store for the X-Men? What, do you think I'm gonna answer that question now? Man, read the freakin interview, willya? Seesh, no respect.

COMICS FOCUS: **X-MEN isn't the first X-title you've worked on, is it?**

MARK WAID: **No. I dialogued a few issues of Uncanny X-Men, and then I did X-Men Alpha and Omega.**

CF: **Were you a fan of the title before you were picked to script it?**

"I wanted to do more death-defying stunts."

MW: **I hadn't been as keyed into it over the past few years as I might have been. I kind of dropped out of the fold for a few years, then I came back in. I came back at a pretty good time because the AOA stuff ('Age of Apocalypse' storyline) did pretty well, and it was a good story.**

CF: **Were you a big fan of Chris Claremont's work?**

MW: **I was a big fan of the early stuff. The Claremont/Byrne and the Claremont/Cockrum stuff.**

CF: **What would you like to do with the X-Men?**

MW: **What I'd like to try and bring back, and I'm only being moderately successful so far, is to get back to high adventure. That's what I promised Andy Kubert when I came on board. I wanted to do more death-defying stunts. I wanted these people out of the mansion using their powers. I wanted them doing amazing things, like saving the world from a big crisis, rather than having them sit around the mansion drinking coffee. Which is cool — and you can have them at the mansion, drinking coffee, once in awhile. But you don't want them doing it every issue, or else it'll make you insane.**

CF: **It would be like the TV show Friends . . .**

MW: **Yea. I mean the soap opera is great, but soap opera doesn't mean you have to have them sitting around having coffee. They can still have soap opera and be out fighting Moses Magnum.**

I was a big fan of the early stuff. The Claremont/Byrne and the Claremont/Cockrum stuff.

CF: Do you think the series moved towards the 'soap opera' genre as the years progressed?

MW: I don't know. I think they have a formula that works really well for them, so I can't deny them that. I'm having a hard time fitting into that formula, but I'm learning.

CF: Why such a hard time? Is it because of the amount of books that are out today?

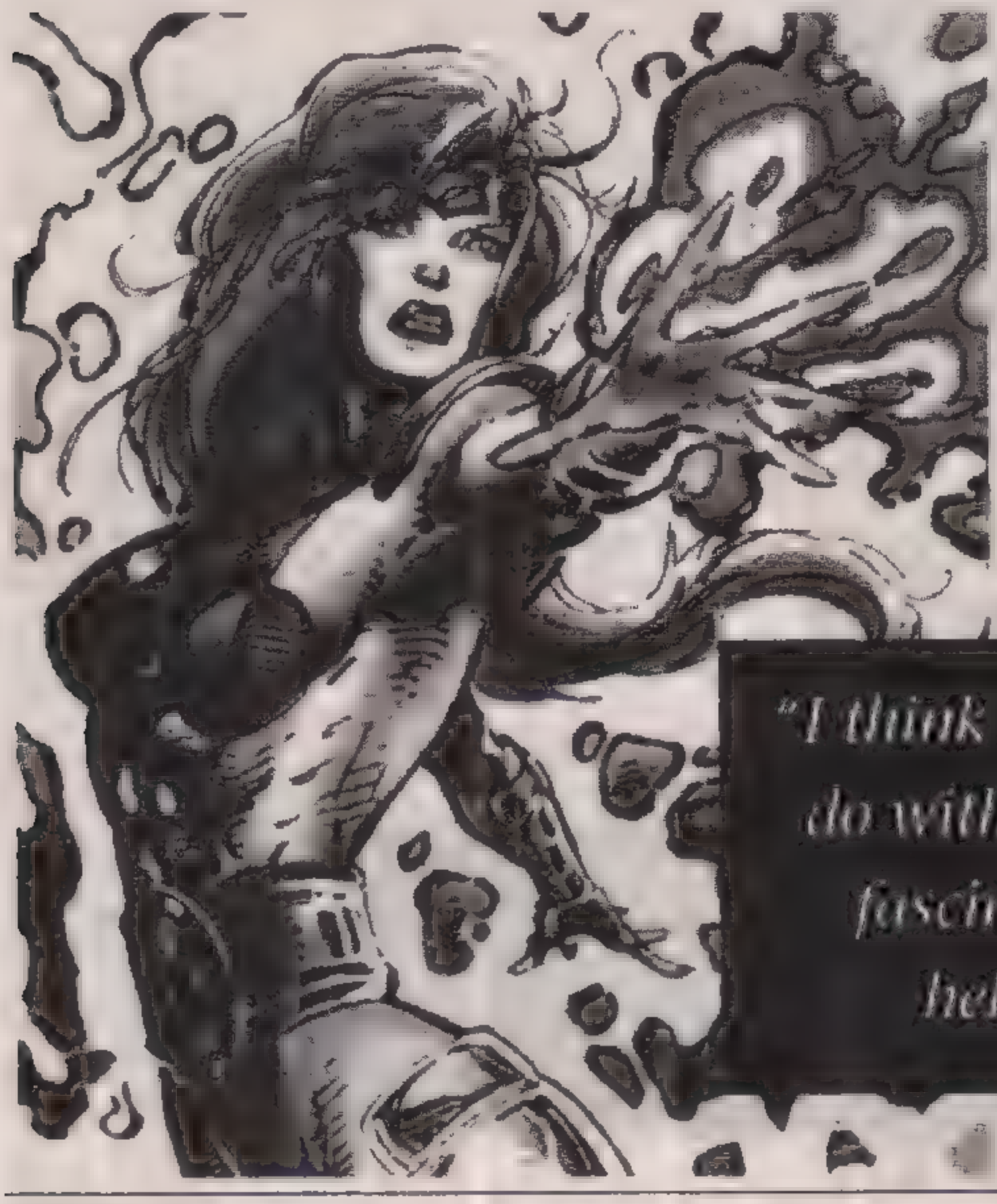
MW: There's so much history out there it makes my brain hurt. And it's also because I like to write action comics, action scenes. I like the character to come out through action rather than conversation over a cup of coffee.

CF: You currently write **The Flash**, which is only one title. How does it feel writing for a universe with so many books as the X-Universe has?

MW: It's very stupefying. It's just huge. It's enormous. It's like looking in the face of God. There's just so much detail and so much thought that goes into the X-books every month, and it fries my brain. Fortunately, that's what Scott (Lobdell) is there for. He's there to be the clearing house of information. It's my job to go 'Okay, I'm thinking we could do this, this month'. It's Scott's job to go 'Oh, we did that six months ago', or 'You can't do that, Moses Magnum is dead'.

CF: What characters are you looking forward to working with?

MW: To me, although I like Gambit, Bishop, and some of the newer characters, my heart is with the older X-Men. For example, I think there's stuff to do with Cyclops to make him a little more sympathetic. And I think there's stuff I can do with Jean (Grey), who fascinates the living hell out of me. She's the second most powerful telepath on Earth, and I want to get into her head and realize what that means. **X-Men** #53 will be a Jean story. It's my take on what it would be like to be a telepath and listen to people all day who walk around and say things completely different than what they're thinking.



"I think there's stuff I can do with Jean Grey, who fascinates the living hell out of me"

CF: I've noticed in recent issues that Professor Xavier has become a little darker . . .

MW: Or at least a just a little colder. Here's a guy who faked his own death, in front of his students, in the 1960's. I mean, he didn't tell anybody but Jean. What a creep! He went around for years blanking people's minds when he didn't want them to know stuff. I honestly think Professor X has a real cold side to him. The key to Xavier is that he has a complete repressed personality. All of the bad stuff that people go through, all the bad thoughts they have, all the slimy things they think about, I think he stuffs away and doesn't deal with them. And that's why he has this cold fish persona.

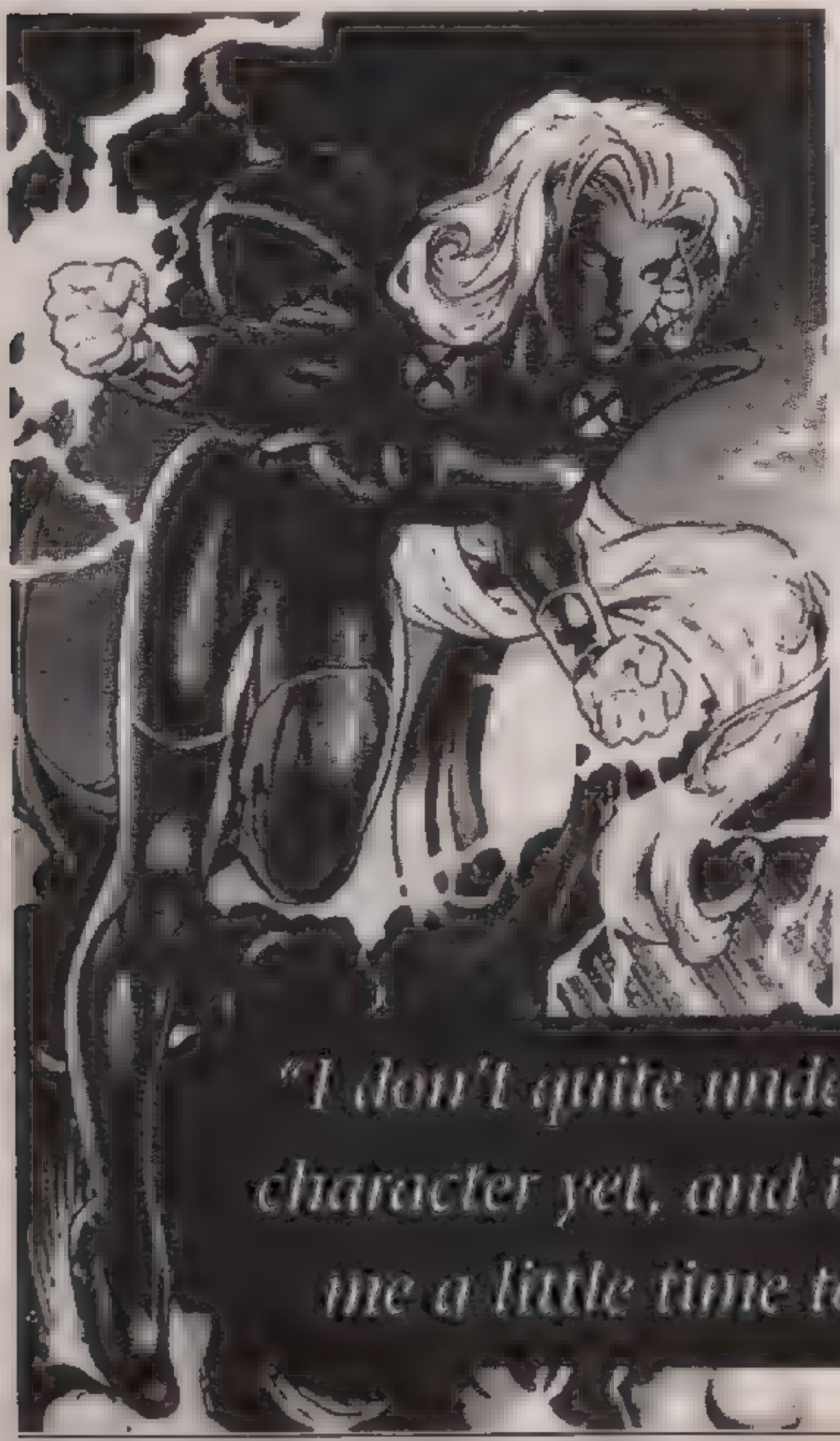
I honestly think Professor X has a real cold side to him.

CF: What are you going to do with Wolverine? Is he going to remain more animalistic for awhile?

MW: Yea, I think so. It certainly gives a whole new perspective on how he interacts with the other X-Men, and how they interact with him. And I think it's the kind of thing that could conceivably bring him and Storm closer together. They've always had some sort of a bond, and she understands the primal nature of things.

CF: Storm has been one of the members that was pushed aside when the original members returned to the group. Will you be trying to refine her character?

MW: I'd like to. In fact, that's one of the challenges Bob (X-book editor Bob Harras) threw at me. However, I don't quite understand her as a character yet, and it's going to take me a little time to get in there. I mean it's not like stepping into a single-character book and coming out swinging. It's not like doing Captain America. I knew who Captain America was, and I knew what I was doing. But with the X-Men it's a million characters, and some of them I know and some I don't know as well. So there's going to be a little more warm-up time. For instance, I think my first issue of X-Men is okay. It's not great, but it's okay. It's just me in the on-deck circle, swinging the bat and trying to get used to it.



"I don't quite understand her as a character yet, and it's going to take me a little time to get in there"

CF: So, what's the deal with Juggernaut? I thought he was sent over to the Ultraverse?

MW: We canceled his universe and now he's back. Actually, Juggernaut is a huge player in the 'Onslaught' story. He was Onslaught's first victim and, as you'll find out, there's a really good reason for that. He knows stuff about Onslaught that nobody else knows he knows.

waid interview

"Juggernaut is a huge player in the 'Onslaught' story.

He knows, but he just can't express it. In other words he knows secrets about Onslaught, but the more he tells people about it the more garbled it comes out.

CF: Is he being portrayed now as more of a hero than a villain?

MW: If anything, less than a complete reprobate, less of a scumbag. I think he's a fascinating character, and he's still a bad guy. But when he's up against Onslaught? Well, everything pales when compared to Onslaught.

CF: Are you thinking of bringing in any new members?

MW: Oh God, no. I'm having a hard enough time mastering the old characters. I don't think we're in any hurry to bring in new guys.

CF: There are probably hundreds of dangling plotlines out there in the X-Universe. Will you be tackling any of them?

MW: Not any one specifically. We will be resolving the X-traitor story quicker than anyone expects. The Legacy Virus was something we were going to tackle this year, but the 'Onslaught' story kind of got in the way. ⊗

I'm having a hard enough time mastering the old characters. I don't think we're in any hurry to bring in new guys.

HERE'S THE STORY . . .
A X-MEN STORYLINE UPDATE

You know, either I was hypnotized or drugged when I accepted this job from his Lordship, publisher Rob Golub, because I wouldn't have taken it so easily after I saw the stuff I had to do. Especially this: An update of the X-Universe storylines. Aren't there something like five million books X-books that come out from Marvel once a month, not including the mini-series, the quarterlies, and the one-shots? What is a poor editor-in-chief supposed to do?

Well, thanks to a bit of ingenuity, as well as assistance from the boys over at Comics Plus, in Mount Holly, NJ, I have been able to compile, what I think, is a fairly comprehensive summary of what the heck is going on right now & what will be happening a few months down the road. Fair warning folks: This is not a detailed list on what is happening to every single mutant out there. If you really need to know that, then you have way too much time on your hands and you need to get a hobby. And now, onward and forward . . .

ONSLAUGHT

You've been hearing about it for awhile, but now it's beginning to happen: Onslaught is coming! Who's this Onslaught? Frankly, nobody knows. The Internet is flooded with guesses of who it could be, from Morph of the "Age of Apocalypse" storyline, to the dark version of Charles Xavier, to Howard Stern (okay, I threw that last one in. But hey, everyone is always saying he's the ultimate evil, so why couldn't it be him?) No matter what, though, Marvel ain't saying a word about who it is.

"Onslaught is concerning our every waking moment," said X-Men writer Mark Waid. "We're trying very, very hard to start with the story first and figure out how it spills out." He added that the storyline will quickly flow out into the Marvel Universe, eventually encompassing every single book.

The story began in **Uncanny X-Men** #322. Juggernaut, recently returned from his stint in the Ultraverse, confronted Onslaught. With a single blow, he tossed Juggernaut from Canada to Hoboken, NJ (man, I wish I could do that). Meanwhile, in **X-Men** #50, several members from the team were nearly destroyed by one of Onslaught's emissaries, named Post.

This development will continue into the May books. In **Uncanny X-Men** #334, Juggernaut will ask Jean Grey to help reveal his memories of the villain. In **X-Men** #54, the two mutants will learn the secret of Onslaught. After that, get ready for hell to break loose (Excuse me, but what does hell actually break loose from).

X-FACTOR FORGES AHEAD

Before this title came out I thought The Avengers had the most unstable team roster. Guess I was wrong, huh? X-Factor has been revamped once again. Currently being led by Forge; it is comprised of a number of interesting members. There's Polaris, who's the only remaining member of the team that was gathered back in issue #71; Wildchild, a former member of Canada's Alpha Flight; Mystique, former member of the Brotherhood of Evil; and Shard. Also joining the team in the near future will be Sabretooth, who's been a thorn in the side of Wolverine for years. By issue #124, readers will begin to learn what agency is molding this team into a band of mutant-hunters.

storyline update

NATE SQUARED

Something weird has been going on in the pages of Cable and X-Man, weird for even X-Universe standards (and that's saying quite a bit). Nate/Cable, the son of Scott Summers from an alternate future universe, ended up meeting Nate Grey/X-Man, the clone of Scott Summers from the 'Age of Apocalypse' universe. Does your head hurt yet? Mine sure does!

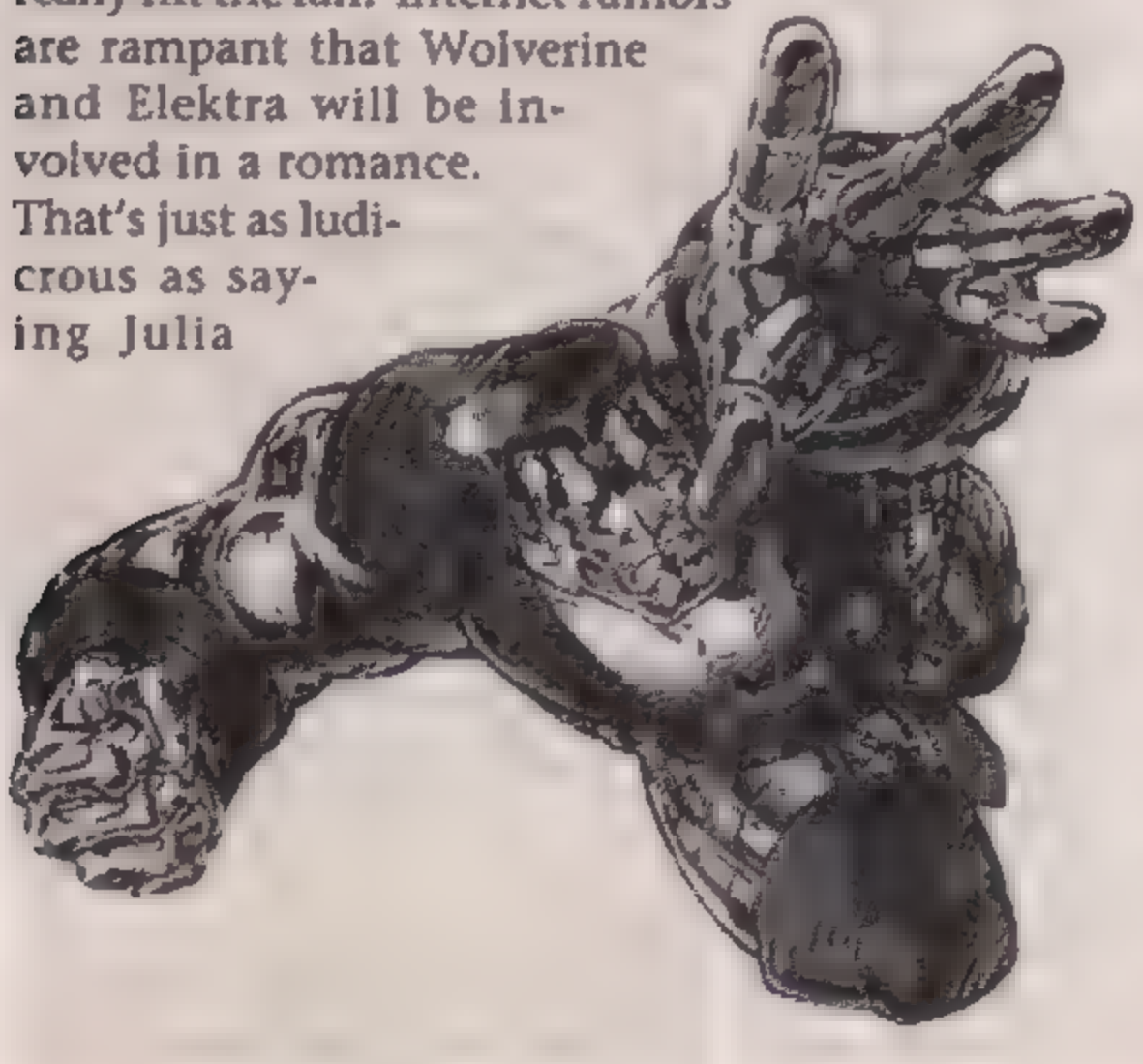
When they met, polite conversation was definitely not on the agenda. What they basically did was kick the stuffing out of each other. In the end, both Nates left the battle licking their wounds; however, there certainly wasn't any time for recovery.

Over in **X-Man #16 & #17**, the younger Nate will have to confront another emissary of Onslaught: Holocaust. He will ask Scarlet Witch and Quicksilver to help him in battle. Meanwhile, in **Cable #33**, the older Nate will confront Post, the Onslaught emissary who kicked the X-Men's collective butts.

BEAUTY & THE BEAST

Wolverine, our favorite merry mutant, hasn't had much good luck these last few years. First, in **X-Men #25**, Magneto vacuumed the adamantium shell right out of Logan's body. In later months he found out that his steel claws were actually bone, and it was real painful when he tried to extend them. Then, in **Wolverine #100**, he had a chance to get the admantium back, but the price was reviving the villain Apocalypse. By the end of that issue, Logan rejected the fusing of metal to bone, regressed into a more animalistic being, and savagely killed all of the bad guys.

When we thought it couldn't get any worse for him, it will. By issue #102, Elektra, Daredevil's former opponent, will try to hunt down Logan. She'll find him in #103, and then the doo-doo will really hit the fan. Internet rumors are rampant that Wolverine and Elektra will be involved in a romance. That's just as ludicrous as saying Julia



Roberts could marry Lyle Lovett — Excuse me? . . .What do you mean they were married? . . . In this universe? . . .Oh my Lord. WHAT IS THIS WORLD COMING TO!!!!!

What Else is Going on The X-Universe . . .

• Colossus and Wolfsbane have joined Nightcrawler, Shadowcat, and the rest of **Excalibur** team in England. They'll be celebrating their 100th issue in May;

• Members of **Generation X** will take on one of their own, as they have to battle a mind-controlled Synch. Meanwhile, Skin will face the X-cutioner alone in issue #17;

• The X-Men's Cyclops and Jean Grey will be transported back in time to the mid 1800's, where they will try to prevent the creation of Apocalypse and Mr. Sinister, in **The Further Adventures of Cyclops and Phoenix**;

• Members of **X-Force** will assist in the escape of mutant hitman Deadpool by issue #56.

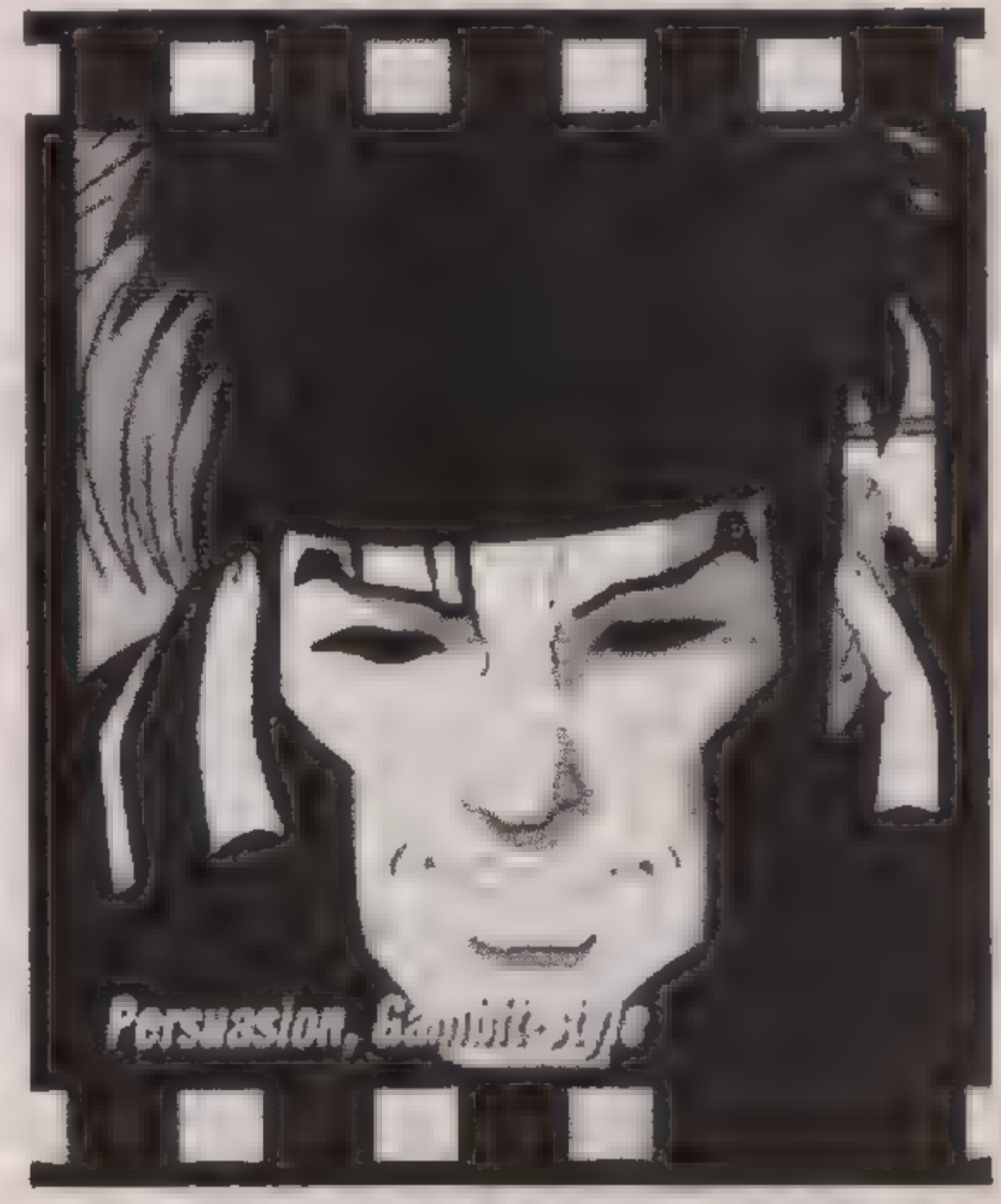
And that's all folks. So, grab some cash, walk to the nearest comic book store, and tell them your Uncle Rich sent you over there to get the latest X-title. You won't get anything special for using my name, but it will increase the size of my ego.

X-MEDIA

THE X-UNIVERSE ON CELLULOID

Hypothetical situation: You're a huge X-Men fan, to the point of being obsessive. You have every single X-title that has come down the path, every trade paperback, every title that the X-Men have guest-starred in or just been mentioned. However, you need more. If you don't, you'll start going through withdrawal. What do you do? First, get some seriously needed therapy. Then, turn on your TV or go to your local theater, because that's where you'll be able to get your X-Men fix.

Since the early 1990's, the X-Men have been a very hot property in Hollywood, and they look to get hotter as their popularity expands beyond the comic book realm. We here at **Comics Focus** have put together a fine piece of writing to tell you a little about the various X-projects currently in production.



IS THERE REALLY AN X-MEN MOVIE?

Well, kinda sort of . . .here's the latest movie scoop at this time:

The film is currently under development by Donner/Schuler-Donner Productions. The company is headed by Richard Donner and his wife. Mr. Donner has directed such flicks as Superman, the Lethal Weapon series, and Maverick. 20th Century Fox currently owns the film rights, and, on a slate of scheduled releases for this year, X-Men was planned for a Christmas premiere.

We at **Comics Focus** believe you shouldn't get your hopes up on this release date. The reason for this? Oh, I don't know . . . no finished script, no cast? You kind of need those things to produce a movie. The fact is, in order to have a film ready by Christmas on the scale of the X-Men, you'd need to start shooting right about now. Not because of the script itself, but because of the magnitude of post-production that would have to go into it to create the special effects.

There is no status on the script or the cast at this time.

However, don't get depressed, because there has been some progress for the movie. A first draft of the script was written by Andrew Kevin Walker, who wrote the movie Seven. It features the five original X-Men and Wolverine vs. "The Brotherhood" (The Brotherhood of Evil Mutants), and Sabretooth. Unfortunately, Walker has been fired and a new writer hired. There is no status on the script or the cast at this time.

We here at **Comics Focus** magazine would like to help move this project along. We've designated ourselves official casting agents, and have found the perfect line-up for the movie. Of course, when we called the Donners and told them, we heard alot of laughter on the other end. That must've been because they were really happy with the people we chose.

Here are the selections:

Professor X: R.E.M.'s Michael Stipe — He seems a little cold, depressed, and looks like he's on

Fox Network's X-Men animated series has constantly been one of the top ten children's shows

death's doorstep. We think he would be perfect as Professor Charles Xavier;

Cyclops: Brad Pitt/Tom Cruise — They're pretty much interchangeable. It won't matter, because whoever is picked will be wearing something over his eyes all the time. Heck, might as well pick someone like Dustin Hoffman;

Marvel Girl: Pamela Lee — Just because the guys here would like to see her in a formfitting uniform (Hey, we may be sexist pigs, but we're sexist pigs with taste);

Angel: Val Kilmer — He's out of a gig right now, he was too important to play Batman. But why not stay in the same genre? It might help him get that sequel to "The Doors";

Iceman: Antonio Banderis — Just so the women here can see him with his shirt off (We may be sexist pigs at Comics Focus, but at least we're equal opportunity sexist pigs);

Beast: Jim Carrey — Just pad his uniform, make him walk around hunched up all day, and pay him $30 million. There's no way he can refuse;

Wolverine: Danny DeVito — Only because he's short. Oh yeah, he has superhero movie experience too.

If any other production companies would like to hire us as their casting agents, please feel free to call us here at our Madison, Wisconsin offices.

THE ANIMATED X-MEN

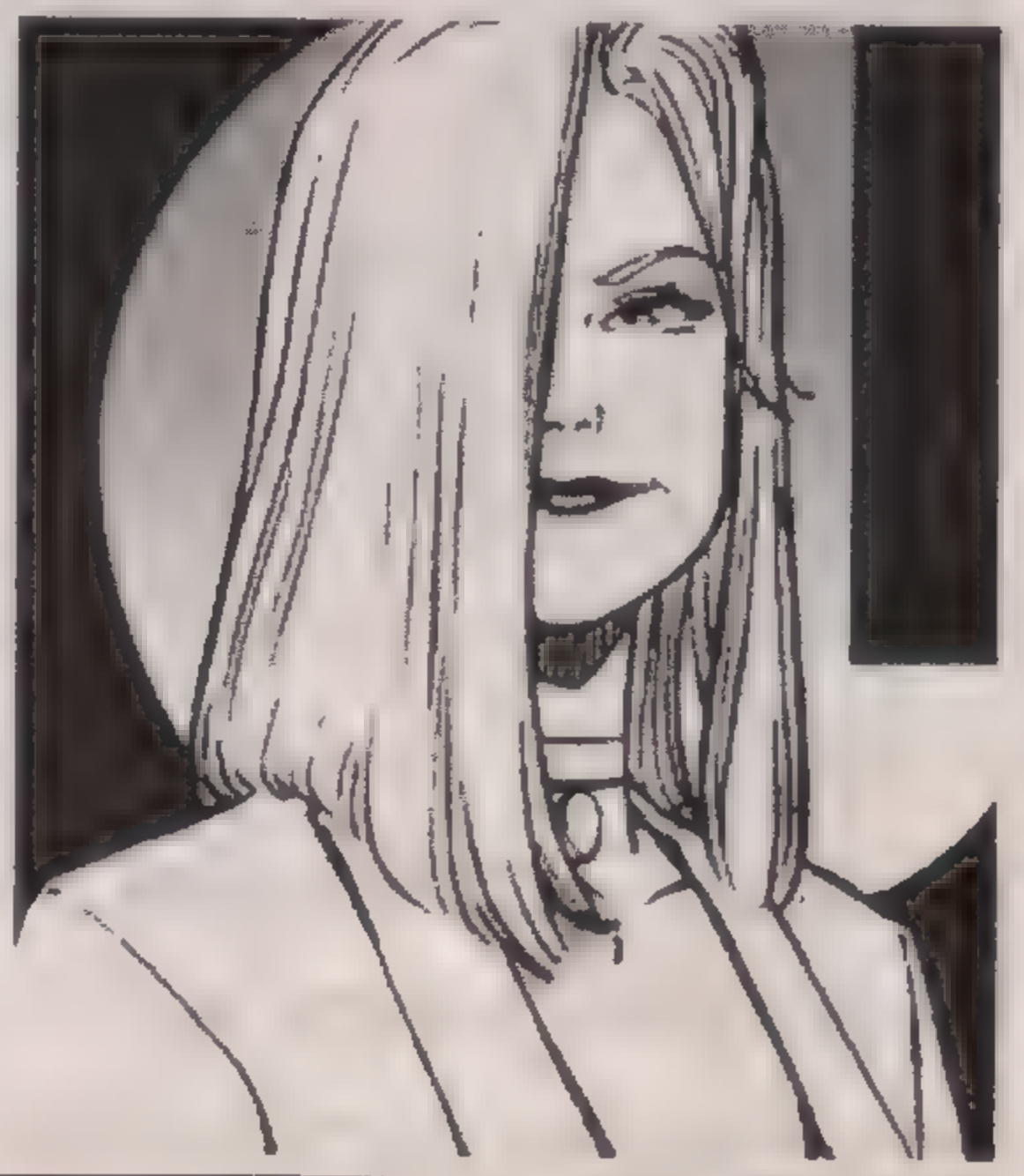
Since 1993, the Fox Network's X-Men animated series has constantly been one of the top ten children's shows. Not only did it delight fans who were clamoring for an X-Men cartoon, but it also brought in a whole new generation of X-groupies. Now in its fourth season, the show, produced in conjunction with the Saban Entertainment Group, has tackled such classic X-Men stories as "The Dark Phoenix Saga", "The Days of Future Past", Apocalypse, and the marriage of Scott Summers and Jean Grey. Granted, they're not exactly the way we remember them — Jubilee and Gambit were not part of many of these stories — but the creators do a fine job nonetheless.

The show is included in Fox's schedule for the 1996-97 season, which will be the show's last.

LIVE FROM XAVIER'S, ITS GENERATION X

A pretty big event, at least for us in the comic industry, occurred on Tuesday, February 20, 1996. Generation X, the first live-action X-related movie, premiered on the Fox Television Network. The story, which was written by Andrew Kevin Walker and executive produced by Stan Lee and Avi Arad (among others), involved the Gen-Xers in a battle against a villain who could manipulate people's dreams. Matt Frewer, of "Max Headroom" fame, starred as the Jim Carrey-ish villain, Russell Tresh. He faced a number of heroes that are featured in the monthly comic: M, Buff, Jubilee, Skin and Mondo. The movie also introduced a new member, Refrax, who was basically a young Cyclops with an attitude (wait a minute, Cyclops has an attitude. My mistake).

Unfortunately, Generation X didn't fare as well in the weekly ratings as they were expected to. For the week of February 19-25, the movie was ranked 72nd in the Nielsen ratings, tied with "The Louie Show". The movie was to be a possible pilot that would have eventually led to a regular series. Frankly, the staff at **Comics Focus** wasn't very impressed with the premiere. There were many loose threads and it focused mostly on Skin and Jubilee. We hope that more work will be done with the premise before a series appears. ⊗



INDEPENDENT THOUGHT

By Bryan J.L. Glass

Independent publisher extrordinare, Bryan Glass, discusses how the X-Men showed him another side of comic books. A side that eventually influenced him to create his own titles.

X-MEN 101

Or How Mutants Taught Me How To Write

I was in high school when the students of Charles Xavier were suffering defeat at the hands of unknown villainy. The Hellfire Club, wealthy Eurotrash industrialists, who had no business being villains in the world of Doc Ock and the Red Skull, had just delivered decisive blows against our heroes' invasion force. The mysterious Jason Wyndgarde had been revealed to be their old foe Mastermind, and subverted their most powerful teammate, Phoenix, into the Black Queen. One by one, these characters full of passion, integrity, drive and commitment, fell by force, manipulation, and the foulest of betrayal. And in the end, the most feisty member of this super team, thought lost in the storm drains, literally clawed his way back, promising vengeance next issue in a story called "Wolverine...Alone".

The book was **Uncanny X-Men #134** and it changed my perception of what comics were and forever altered my belief of what they could be. I was ignorant of their history, their many incarnations, the origin by Lee & Kirby, the dynamics of the Roy Thomas/Neal Adams run, the recreation by Len Wein & Dave Cockrum, and the many subplots, building in intensity towards the X-Men's greatest story, "The Dark Phoenix Saga". I knew none of what had come or where it was going, only that I read a single issue smack-dab in the middle of an ongoing plot and come away with a thrill that only the best stories leave you with. In twenty some odd pages I already knew my favorite characters and breathlessly waited the 30 days for Wolverine to emerge from that sewer.

As Jean Grey died in Scott Summers' arms three publishing months later, my love affair was only just beginning. By the time Kitty Pryde joined and had her trial by fire less than a year later, my mere afterschool corner-store job had paid the rising back issue costs to complete my new X-Men run from #94 through #141.

To the recent X-Fan, the events I relate are ancient history, having no bearing on the convoluted X-Verse of today, and having been already rehashed in the 10 year old reprint title **Classic X-Men**, now canceled. But there was a magic back then that runs deeper than the generation gap that traditionally separated elder fans from the new. That magic went by the names of Claremont & Byrne who, bimonthly at the beginning, crafted an ongoing tale of pathos and splendor, shocking revelations and dynamic action. Consummate characters, as individual as the mannerisms in

Consummate characters, as individual as the mannerisms in which they spoke, were subtly crafted and refined on a month-by-month basis

which they spoke, were subtly crafted and refined on a month-by-month basis. Instead of stock cliches, the X-Men breathed and matured. As each year passed, these mutants we had grown to love as our own, grew from the preceding 12 months worth of adventure and interplay, their interpersonal relationships in a constant state of flux.

All the fundamental lessons of comic superhero team books were on display during that era, and pushed to the limit. Long before the industry embraced the X-Men's surface cosmetics as a merchandising How-To Guide to creating a successful Team formula, the Chris Claremont/John Byrne stint served as a textbook for an enjoyably satisfying, character-driven Team book beneath the surface gloss. The prime lesson I derived from these books was that code names, costumes, and super powers have nothing to do with quality superheroes; only genuine characterization keeps you coming back to a book you love. Names can change; just ask Kitty Pryde/Sprite/Ariel/Shadow Cat or the secret alter ego of Jean Grey. Costumes have rippled with the tides of time, from the garish 70's disco fashions of Colossus & Storm, to the current vogue of trench coats, shoulder pads, belt buckles, and thigh packs. Super powers are inherently interchangeable with the best characters always finding new and innovative ways to utilize the posers they have. I personally believe that if Wolverine had shot eye beams and Cyclops had been the claw-weilder, then every hero team in the industry today would include a savage, eye beaming maniac in their stock roster.

The X-Men, by its very quality and strength, became the standard formulae by which all subsequent Team books were based. Sadly, I watched my beloved heroes & friends corrupted to become cliches of their own success, but I realize that is more the fault of corporate-driven policies than a fault to be laid at the doorstep of any single creator. So I find, even in the loss of everything I held dear about the X-Men, they still provide me with core professional lessons. Creators/Writers/Artists are not responsible for multi-monthly titles, meandering cross-line crossovers, or guest star gimmickry. What Wall Street sells today, it expects to sell tomorrow.

The creative primer that X-Men established for me in the early eighties was soon augmented by the most phenomenal explosion of comics talent the industry has ever seen. The Claremont/Byrne X-Men paved my way to Miller's **Daredevil**, Wolfman/Perez' **New Teen Titans**, Simonson's **Thor**, Moore's **Swamp Thing** and **Miracleman**, **Elfquest**, **Cerebus**, and ultimately **Dark Knight Returns** and **Watchmen**. It is impossible for me to isolate which of the above works influenced me the most and thereby affects my own writing endeavors, but I strive to follow in the footsteps of those who have shown me the way. Yet, while each stretched the medium in a different direction, it was X-Men that first showed me the magic of Group Mechanics. ⊗

Brian J.L. Glass is publisher of the Philadelphia-based Lost Cause Productions, where he writes the further adventures of Flex Woman and Spandex Girl in the title **Spandex Tights**. He will also be handling the creative chores for **Ship of Fools**, a science-fiction comic premiering this summer from Caliber. When not being creative, Brian likes to be a lazy slob who picks lint out of his belly-button (Oh, wait. I'm confusing him with my brother).

X-STUFF
or
THE UNUSED MAGAZINE SPACE I HAD

This is it! The page you, the Comics Focus reader, have waited all issue to get to . . .probably because it's at the end of the magazine. So, without further ado . . .

SALEM CENTER, THAT TODDLING TOWN

I'm sure you've asked this question to yourself once in a while: Is there really such a place as Salem Center, New York? By gumption, there is! And it's exactly where the comic book says it is.

Located in New York's Westchester County, Salem Center is approximately 40 miles north of Manhattan. The village, located in the northeast corner of the county, near the borders of Putnam County and the state of Connecticut, has a population of 450 and is 339 feet above sea level. It is part of a larger township, North Salem, a banking community with a population of around 4500 persons. (Source: 1995 Rand McNally Commercial Atlas & Marketing Guide)

So, now that you know where it is, get on the phone to your travel agent and book your next vacation there. Make sure to ask the local residents if they know where Xavier's Institute is. I'm sure the police will be more than happy to take you to the Institute. I'm sure they'll even provide a lovely white, restraining jacket for you.

WHO BEAST, BLUE BEAST

Here's another question that's probably popped up once or twice: When the heck did Hank McCoy, a.k.a. Beast, become blue and furry? He never did, it's all been a dream. He's going to wake up one day and find Patrick Duffy in the shower (of course I'm referring to the TV show "Dallas". Geez, get a clue people!)

Seriously, Hank's transformation occurred in **Amazing Adventures #11**, between the end of X-Men's initial run and their reintroduction in **Giant Size X-Men #1**. While working as a researcher at the Brand Corporation, Hank discovered the chemical element that triggered mutations. He decided that, by sampling the element, he would be able to change his appearance in order to weed out enemies of his employer. The serum he created caused blue fur to grow all over his body, enlarged his canine teeth, and increased his already exceptional agility.

Unfortunately, he remained in that state too long, and was unable to reverse the process. Eventually, Hank McCoy learned to accept his more bestial form. And to this day, (other than a brief reversal to human form between **X-Factor #3-31**) Beast remains the furry mutant that every fan adores.

Hank's transformation occurred in Amazing Adventures #11

NIGHTCRAWLER BOY

Did you know that Nightcrawler almost ended up at DC Comics? Pish, you say? Well, read on, unbeliever —

It all happened way back in 1973, while artist Dave Cockrum was penciling DC's **Superboy & The Legion of Super-Heroes**: The adventures of a 30th Century superhero team in which the Teen of Steel was a member. Dave came up with an idea to introduce another super-team into the Legion universe. He was going to call it "The Outsiders", and one of its members was going to be — you guessed it — Nightcrawler. Unfortunately, or fortunately for X-fans, the idea never bore fruit. The character was put on the shelf until Dave brought him back, two years later, in **Giant Size X-Men #1**. So, every time you think that Nightcrawler isn't right for the X-Men, just think what he would've been like as a member of the Legion of Substitute Heroes.

THE SUMMERS BUNCH

Who's related to the X-Men's Scott Summers (Cyclops). Actually, the question should be who isn't related to Scott Summers. It seems like everyone in the X-Universe has some kind of blood or gene tie to Scott. Going into the details of how they're all related could lead to brains exploding. Therefore, I think I'll just give you the highlights:

• Scott's father, Christopher Summers, is the leader of the Starjammers, a small band of space pirates. He goes by the code name Corsair;

• Scott's brother, Alex Summers, is the mutant hero Havok. Havok, who's power allows him to absorb and transform cosmic radiation, was a member of the X-Men as well as leader of X-Factor. Alex has been romantically involved for years with Lorna Dane (Polaris of X-Factor);

• Cyclops' first wife, Madelyne Pryor, was a clone of Jean Grey created by Mr. Sinister (who is also related to Scott in some way, but please don't ask me how). His second wife is the real Jean Grey, or so we think;

• Rachel Summers, his daughter, was from a future in which all the X-Men were killed. She eventually gained the power of the Phoenix and became a member of the X-Men and Excalibur;

• Nathan Summers, born to Scott and Madelyne Pryor, was kidnaped and taken to an alternate future universe (aren't they always?). He eventually re-emerged in our timeline as the hero Cable;

Scott's other son(?), Nathan Grey, is from the universe of "Age of Apocalypse". This Nate wasn't born, but rather, genetically created from cells of Scott Summers. He currently resides in our universe as X-Man.

Okay, that's it. I'm done. My head is smoking. I better lie down before my it melts.

CROSSOVER BUTT KICKING

Unless you've recently had your head in the sand (which would be the case if you were an ostrich) you know the biggest crossover of the decade occurred only mere months ago. **Marvel vs. DC** pitted the greatest heroes of DC Comics against those of the Marvel Universe, including three of the X-Men: Jubilee, Storm & Wolverine. The best part of the four-issue mini-series was that the reading public had the opportunity to vote on who would win some of the battles. In the end, the X-Men kicked some serious booty.

Here's what happened. At the beginning of issue #3, Jubilee was quickly beaten by Robin. X-fans were a little down. However, in a later battle, they were overjoyed by the defeat of the space-bully Lobo by Wolverine. By the next fight, X-fans were partying in the streets as Storm really laid the law down on Wonder Woman. In the end, the X-Men won 2-1 (Marvel won 6-4 over DC, with a tie in the Captain America-Batman battle). It just goes to show you how much power fans of the X-Men have today. Now, if we could only get them to vote for a decent president.

It seems like everyone in the X-Universe has some kind of blood or gene tie to Scott.

Readers were overjoyed by the defeat of the space-bully Lobo by Wolverine.

AND FINALLY *(Thank the Lord . . .)*

From the home offices in Pemberton, New Jersey, the top nine reasons why X-Men is the greatest comic book in the world —

9. They melt in your mouth, not on your hands;
8. They could kick the butts of those wimpy Baywatch lifeguards;
7. Compared to their hardships, our lives are really stress free;
6. DC Comics canceled the Inferior Five series (Dumb Bunny, what a babe);
5. Subliminal messages within the book's text make us go out and buy every single title every single month;
4. Three words: No O.J. Simpson;
3. Superman's a mama's boy;
2. Mutants, mutants, mutants;

And, the number one reason why the X-Men is the greatest comic in the world . . .

1. I'm getting paid alot of money to say it is!

Thank you. Make sure you try the chicken. I'll be here all week. Good night everybody!

The Ever-lovin' End.

ENTITY BACK ISSUES!

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Nira X #1 (Vol. 1)
$10; Signed $20

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Nira X #4 (Vol. 1)
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Nira X #1 (Vol. 2) $5
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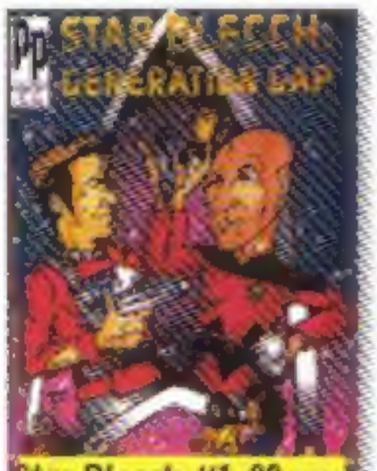
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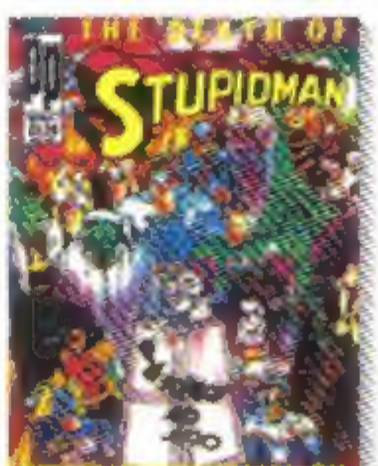
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Warzone #3
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X-Cons vs X-Farce
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